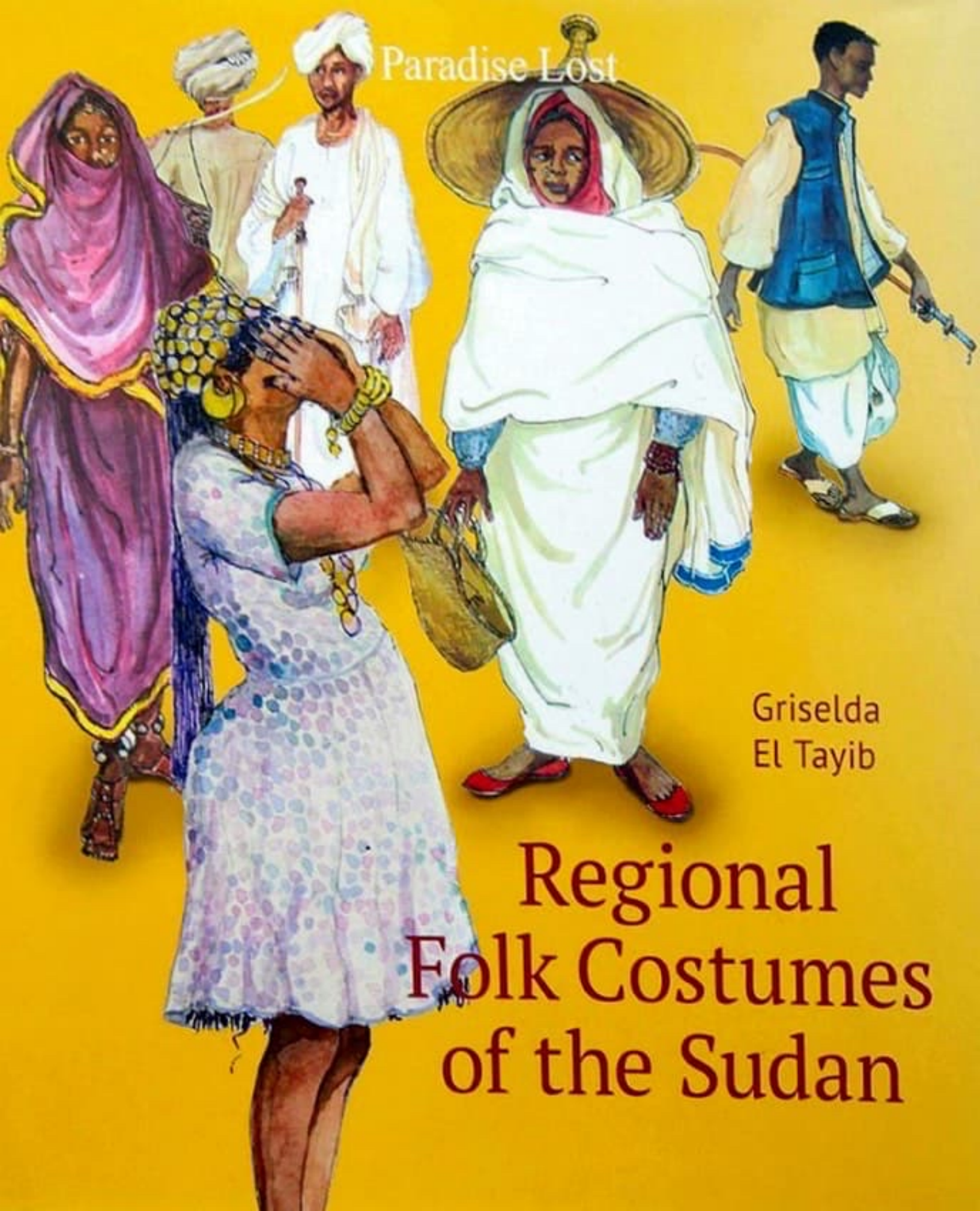
Paradise Lost
Griselda
El Tayib
Regional
Folk Costumes
of the Sudan

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Regional Folk Costumes of the Sudan

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For my beloved husband,
the late Abdulla El Tayib, author of many books –
here is my one and only book for you.

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Acknowledgements

The idea of making a pictorial record of Sudanese national and regional costumes had been a vague ambition of mine for some twenty odd years.

I am grateful to the Postgraduate College and the Institute of African and Asian Studies and its director, Professor Yusuf Fadl, for awarding me a postgraduate scholarship for two and a half years from 1972–75 and for a grant and transport facilities to enable me to carry out the research and field work necessary for this study. Thanks are due to the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Khartoum which set me on this course, and to my first supervisor, Dr Peter Harries Jones, who encouraged me to tackle this subject from a sociological angle. This study ended under the tutelage of the Folklore Department of the Institute of African and Asian Studies where my supervisor, Dr Hamid Hurreiz, took on the arduous task of steering me to complete the research; to him I owe a great debt of thanks for his solemn and conscientious supervision and for his high standard of intellectual perception and scholastic gravity, as well as his ability to lead students to participate in the methodology of the academic study of folklore in the Sudan. Dr Herman Bell proffered willing assistance with the Nubian material, particularly in regards to the vocabulary. The late Dr Ahmad Mohamed Ali Hakeem gave valuable advice on the historical background chapter.

In the field, I have so many people to thank that I cannot name them all. But I must thank my hosts and informants. My friends and relatives in Kassala, Gadarif, Wagar, Al Damer, Omdurman and Khartoum have endured my sporadic questioning about their clothing and costumes over many years. Dr Abdulla Ahmed Hassan introduced me to his people, the Rashaida, and gave me the benefit of his own knowledge and intelligent observations. On field trips, I have had the constant support and advice of the university driver, the late Hassan Kheir Allah.

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many years of encouragement, expert advice and loyal support. As well as a source of constant encouragement throughout this research, my late husband Professor Abdulla El Tayib has been a most valuable and never-failing source of information and inspiration.
In 2016, the decision was taken to turn this thesis into 'coffee table' format with additional illustrations. Therefore any mention of 'today' applies both to the thesis written in the 1970s and the last chapter written in 2016. Two main events influenced the decision to publish this book: the authoress and photographer Enikö Nagy was looking for a new project, and when I mentioned my costume research she embraced the project with her very own enthusiasm, visionary spirit and persistence. Most valuable has been her experience in producing and distributing 'Sand in My Eyes: Sudanese Moments' – a massive photographic record of people, their oral literature and lifestyles in Sudan. From the beginning, she recruited the freelance writer Sara El-Nager whose double nationality, bilingual writing, translating and researching abilities plus her sympathetic understanding of Sudanese social realities has been a constant, patient and efficient help in bringing this book into existence.
My deep thanks to the copy editor Sam Berner for her highly professional work on this manuscript and for her cultural sensitivity and generosity, as well as to Leena Habiballa for her kindness and very meticulous proofread of the final manuscript. I am grateful to Beate Bittner, who with patience and creativity shaped the design and layout of the book, for her passion in this project working with an unfamiliar theme and region. Great help was given to me by the principal of the Khartoum International Community School and the school's reprographics unit. My cooperation in 2014 with Robert Dvorak and team on his book about Nubia, revealed to me the generosity and understanding proffered by Mr Osama Daoud and the DAL Group. When I approached his wife Samia Omar with this idea she expressed real interest and passed me on to Fathi Osman, who in charge of previous DAL publications, had nursed Robert's book to term. So, to my great good fortune DAL has sponsored this book which I hope will do DAL and all these good people proud. To them all, I extend my everlasting thanks.
And now, having decided to go ahead and publish this book, which contains my original research and a chapter touching upon some of the changes that have taken place in the last thirty years, it is hoped that generations to come will find it a useful reference.

Griselda El Tayib
Khartoum, October 2017

Foreword

Griselda El Tayib is endowed with great ability for intimate perception of daily details of social life, as well as a talent for portraying such details. Her scholarly work on Sudanese costumes is an outstanding achievement. It reflects artistic talent as well as academic training.

As a postgraduate student, Griselda undertook a substantial amount of thorough field work in Gadarif, Kassala, Wagar and Suakin in eastern Sudan. She also undertook to travel from Al Damer to the villages west of Shendi where traditional weaving has been practised as a cottage industry for centuries. Thus, in addition to her study of costumes, she also closely observed various processes of production. The three kinds of weaving, including factory, the upright and the pit looms are examples of this.

Griselda's personal abilities as a perceptive observer of the minute details of everyday life, enabled her to write a valuable MA thesis on traditional Sudanese costumes. In fact, this notable thesis is the first academic work in the Sudan to tackle such a topic. On the basis of such work she was awarded the first MA degree in Folklore by the University of Khartoum in 1975. In this respect, she is a pioneer.

In addition to its social and historical importance, the study of traditional costumes is highly relevant to the fields of social studies, tourism, the economy and local industry. Making this work accessible to a wider audience, in the form of this present book, further serves to emphasise the value of this work and Griselda's continued interest in the subject.

I have been associated with Griselda's work for nearly four decades, accordingly I realise its artistic, academic and cultural importance. On such basis, I am honoured to introduce this work to the reader.

Dr Sayed Hamid Hurreiz
Professor of Folklore, Dean of the Faculty of Languages
International University of Africa
Khartoum, December 2016

Foreword

This book is an important work covering a little-known aspect of indigenous culture in riverain Sudan. Its author and illustrator has been an outstanding figure in Sudan's artistic and literary scene for decades. It is therefore both a pleasure and an honour for the DAL Group to help bring Griselda El Tayib's original MA thesis in folklore to the widest possible readership. I personally have known Griselda since childhood, have been witness to her numerous creative activities and it is my pleasure to introduce this fascinating study.

Griselda's immersion in everyday Sudanese life and her integration into its society over decades have given her an in-depth understanding of it, a fact that was recognised in 2002 when she was awarded an MBE, cited for contributions to British-Sudanese relations.

On her first arrival in Sudan in 1950, accompanying her husband Professor Abdulla El Tayib, the internationally renowned Sudanese poet and scholar of Arabic, she went straight to her husband's hometown of Al Damer, 350 kilometres north of Khartoum. There she experienced at first hand the varied culture and traditions of a riverain village of northern Sudan. The features of traditional Sudanese costume of these early days, many of which have now totally disappeared, are recorded for us in this book.

Griselda was able to develop fluency in spoken Sudanese Arabic which allowed her to communicate with her husband's family and ultimately with others all over northern and eastern Sudan. This fluency was an invaluable asset in her research.

Her paintings of traditional Sudanese costumes and scenes succeed to convey the hidden beauty of Sudanese life. The images and text in this book show not only deep understanding and appreciation of Sudanese culture as exhibited in its traditional apparel, but also the artist's eye for detail.

Griselda's zest for life and ceaseless energy shine through all her work. Her lively sense of humour and witty outlook on life enabled her to enjoy the naming of newer fashions and styles that reflect current events or hot topics, and make her academic research into the history and influences behind the origins of Sudanese national dress such a valuable and entertaining contribution to the body of work on Sudanese culture.

Samia Omar Mohamed Osman
Founder and Manager of KICS-Khartoum International Community School
Khartoum, August 2017

Introduction

There undoubtedly exist certain costumes and styles of dress, both male and female, which mark out a Sudanese in a foreign city, such as are now worn by Sudanese Ambassadors and their wives on formal occasions and may be claimed as the Sudanese national dress. But within the Sudan there exist varieties of regional costumes which fit the definition of 'folk costume'. The progressive erasure of differences was mentioned in a notice at the exhibition 'Our Cultural Heritage' which was held at the Sudan National Museum in May 1973 – it read: "The impact of modern civilisation and transportation is levelling the material culture and increasingly unifying the differences between the tribes. There are no distinctive tribal borders today". Nevertheless, these interesting differences still exist today in various parts of the country, in areas around the Red Sea, Damazin and Greater Kordofan. What happened in 19th century Europe in terms of urbanisation as a result of the Industrial Revolution was happening in the Sudan three to four decades ago, arising from the developmental and cultural revolutions which followed independence and self-government in 1956. Further momentous changes were caused by the impact of television, the Arab fashion magazines and the Internet, in addition to the large Sudanese diaspora in every continent of the world.

This book is an attempt to create a descriptive and pictorial record of some of the Sudanese national costumes in specific areas of the country. In considering the scope and limitations of the material to be surveyed in this record, it was decided to exclude tribal and ethnic groups in what is known as the country South Sudan today and in the new southern Sudan. In fact, there is much to be urgently studied here and James Faris' book 'Nuba Personal Art' is an excellent example of the sort of study and pictorial record needed. Western Sudan is full of tremendously rich varieties and styles of folk costume and material culture but limitations of time and space did not permit them to be included here and it is hoped that soon someone else will take up this urgent work. This present study, therefore, is limited to the areas of eastern Sudan and the central riverain Sudan. A few pictorial efforts to acknowledge this gap can be found at the end of the book.

Except for the Copts, all the people in the area studied are Muslims and it is expected that their attitudes to their costumes are governed by the tenets of Islam. These attitudes in themselves have undergone many upheavals over the last three decades and waves of Islamic puritanism have had their lasting impact on dress codes and personal declaration of various shades of asceticism on the one hand, and temporary defiance, especially by the youth of today, on the other. Historically, the longest established centres of Islamic teaching and influence became

diffusive centres of influence in the wearing of correct Muslim dress leading ultimately to a homogeneous costume for the whole riverain area. This was further consolidated by the decrees of the Mahdist reform movement in the 19th century.

It is to be expected that in proportion to the increased distance and inaccessibility of some groups, there might be some deviation in conformity as well as possible survival of pre-Islamic garments, such as the *rahat*, leather thong skirt, and ornamentation such as the facial *shilukh* scarification. It is a sociological and historical investigation, documentation and illustration of these local variants that is the main object of this work. Also, part of the intention in the field work lies not only in tracing the ethno-history and cross-cultural explanations of these diversities, but also in ascertaining from the people themselves how they feel about their local styles and what rational or irrational, traditional or superstitious reasons and motives enable these interesting items to survive.

To clarify, it has been necessary to give sometimes rather long verbal descriptions of the costumes in addition to the detailed full-page illustrations. After first describing the basic items and commenting on local materials, the costumes are described throughout the life cycle. Occasional sociological pointers have been noted and every attempt was made to get snatches of comments and adages of folkloric relevance about the local dress. This can be an amusing pastime and readers are encouraged to join in. As transcription of place, item and personal names from Arabic, Nubian, and other Sudanese languages to English lacks unified rules, in each case the variation was chosen that most closely reflects the pronunciation. Repeated field visits were made between November 1972 and April 1975 to sample spots of the areas covered. People were interviewed in their homes, usually very informally, although a questionnaire was used. Drawings were mostly done on the spot, and then finished at home using notes and references. Invariably these interviews were conducted in an atmosphere of great friendliness but it was often only on the second visit that points had been better understood and new contributions were forthcoming. In addition to home visits, prolonged visits to tailors and shopkeepers in Kassala, Halfa al Jadida and Al Damer provided very useful information. Visits to weavers, indigo dyers and shoemakers also produced essential background information. As many drawings as possible were made of real people wearing their apparel in the course of their normal life. In fact, the drawings which accompany this text constitute a most essential element of this record. For this purpose, drawings are sometimes better than photographs as it is possible to pick out certain essential details which a camera

might blur. The plan was to start with those ethnic groups in northern Sudan where rapidly increasing urbanisation, major mass media influence and the population movements due to resettlement were threatening the extinction of certain distinct forms of dress. The need to record all this in the 1970s was very urgent, for already within two and a half decades I had personally witnessed the disappearance of the *bullama* face veil, the *gurgab*, a waist wrapper, the women's *markub*, flat open shoes, and *karkab* wooden clogs, and increasingly also of the crescent-shaped earrings called *fidayat* and the *zumam*, nose ornament, all of which were quite common in the early 1950s.

The work is set out in eight chapters. The first chapter attempts to synthesise from research in books and visits to museums and archaeological sites, the thin thread of historical background and continuity. Chapter II tackles the most urgent area of the study: the Nubians whose dispersal and resettlement on the Khashm al Girba Scheme has tended to hasten the process of integration of their widespread diaspora into their new home in New Halfa and their assimilation into general society. Chapter III deals with another separate ethnic group, the Rashaida, who historically are relative newcomers to the Sudan and who at present are spread over a very wide area of eastern Sudan but who, unlike the Nubians, show no signs of integrating into the general urban Sudanese cultural pattern and thus remain a very distinct and remarkably picturesque group. Chapter IV deals with three Beja tribes of eastern Sudan – the Halenga, Beni Amer and Hadendawa, in whom there is still a rich variety of styles to be seen. The central riverain Sudan area in Chapter V is dealt with as a homogeneous whole and here the differences will tend to be more between pastoral and settled peoples rather than between one locality and another. The history, versatility and wide variety of Sudanese women's *tobs* merited a separate Chapter VI. Chapter VII aims to reach certain conclusions and notes some of the changes which were liable to affect the outlook of the future as it was seen in 1975. The final Chapter VIII was written in 2016, for this book. It attempts to catch up with what has happened since 1975 and considers changes in Sudanese costumes and the significant events that influenced them. The chapter contains observations on the latest fashion trends.

It is to be hoped that with increasing cosmopolitan mobility, the Sudanese will become more conscious of the beauty and merits of their own material culture and make efforts to record as much as possible before it is too late.

Griselda El Tayib
Khartoum, February 2017

Historical Threads

Along the continuum of Sudan's ancient history, successive periods of consolidation and cultural development alternated with periods of decadence and large patches of 'dark ages' of confusion. Not much is now known about these times. But at one point along this continuum, roughly around the 17th century, with the consolidation of certain tribal groupings in the Sudan, north of latitude 10°, a series of Sudanese regional folk costumes evolved. These groupings may be roughly classified as Nubian, central riverain Sudanese and eastern Sudanese and form the main object of this work. These tributaries, continued to merge slowly into the mainstream of what has now developed into the Sudanese nation accompanied by the emergence of what could be perceived as male and female national costumes.
Whereas nowadays fashion changes, innovations, modifications, hairstyles, trends in gold and other jewellery often emanate from the capital Khartoum outward, this was not always the case in the past. Each of the regions studied here was subjected to different internal and external influences which affected clothing: trade and availability of various items, or imitation of conquerors, leaders and other high prestige groups.

Prehistory

But what of the prehistoric people of this part of Sudan? Archaeological excavation of a Mesolithic mound near the site of the present Khartoum Civil Hospital[1], revealed beads, pendants and lip plugs from ostrich shells, various colourful stones and python vertebrae, belonging to seasonal pastoralist people following the annual flood of the Nile, and farming settlements on the sandy mounds and low *jebels*, hills, that still remained uncovered when the flooding White and Blue Nile met over most of the Gezira region nearby. One such site at Jebel Tomat, was the subject of archaeological investigations by Desmond Clark and a team from Berkeley University, California, USA (1972–73). The settlements here can be dated back to 2000 BCE, and excavations have revealed one small fragment of woven cloth and some spindle wheels – as well as some pierced but unshaped stones which might have been warp-weights. Since spinning is usually closely linked to weaving, we can presume that the people here were weaving cloth since about 590 BCE which is the approximate date Clark[2] attributed to the site.

Kush

From about 2000 BCE, the ancient Egyptians incorporated into their empire the province south of Aswan which they called Kush. It included that part of today's northern Sudan reaching to the Fourth Cataract. By about 700 BCE, this Kingdom of Kush[3] had become so powerful and lower Egypt so weak, that the Kushite King Kashta overpowered Egypt and became its pharaoh. These Kushite kings ruled both the Upper and Lower Kingdoms until driven out from the Lower Kingdom by the Assyrians in the 6th century BCE. From that period on, they ruled Kush from their Kingdom of Napata, opposite Jebel Barkal which was a great religious centre. Their kings and queens were buried in the Royal Cemeteries of Kush, Nuri and Kurru. Archaeological evidence at these Royal Cemeteries allows us to form an idea of the advanced degree of civilisation and material culture the Kingdom of Kush achieved. The decorations on the walls of Queen Qalhata's burial chamber show attendance figures of dark-skinned people dressed in pleated white material, animal skins wrapped around their waists and draped over their shoulders. Many examples of jewellery were found in these tombs: beads of stone and faience, and some barrel beads of gold such as are still worn today in north-eastern Sudan. Even the horses that were ritually buried with the kings of Kush had trappings of threaded faience beads[4]. In the southern part of Kush, near the present day Shendi, the fertile basin known as Isle of Meroë developed as an alternative and rival capital to Napata. Around 540 BCE the capital in fact moved to Meroë and it became a cultural centre that lasted for almost six centuries.

Meroë

The Kingdom of Meroë (540 BCE-AD 380) developed into an indigenous Sudanese civilisation characterised by a considerable wealth of cultural material. The archaeological evidence shows that this civilisation, although neighbouring the very advanced culture of Pharaonic Egypt[5] and retaining many Egyptian and Mediterranean influences, did develop sufficiently uniquely to be considered a separate culture, enabling us to refer to a Meroitic culture, and Meroitic customs[6]. The King Natakamani and Queen Amanitore on the walls of the Lion Temple at Naqa show characteristic Meroitic details of dress and ornament – a knee-length wrapper with what appears to be a decorative woven band and many pleated folds for the king and an ankle-length wrapper elaborately decorated to represent an eagle's wings for the queen. Items

which resemble certain surviving Sudanese wedding regalia appear in the scene of the king on the outside wall, which shows him wearing a forehead band and tassels down his back. The queen seems to be wearing a tasselled cloak of a material showing a ribbed effect[7].
Excavations of burial sites at Karanog have revealed remains wrapped in linen cloth which must have come from Egypt, but cotton has been found at Meroë, and the presence of spindle wheels[8] and loom weights suggests that cotton was widely used. Further evidence for the usage of cotton in that period comes from the inscription of King Aezanes of Axum in Ethiopia (AD 325–375), telling of his conquest over the Nubian 'island' of Meroë, in which he boasts that "my people destroyed their stores of grain and cotton"[9]. In some early Meroitic graves at Faras, Sururab, Meroë and Geili, bodies wore penannular anklets of bronze similar to the heavy silver ones worn by some Sudanese women today. Some necklaces found in the royal graves were made of beaten gold plaques interspersed with beads – also similar to those worn nowadays by women in Nubia. The most common kind of beads found in Meroitic sites were carnelian, and some Meroitic spade-shaped carnelians on display in the Sudan National Museum are like those still sold in Omdurman market. Facial scarification and blue facial tattoos and the use of antimony for decorating the eyes, are all cosmetic techniques that survived from Meroitic times to the present day in different parts of Sudan.

The Christian era

The Christian era began in the Sudan in the beginning of the 6th century AD with the advent of Byzantine missionaries Julianos and Longinus[10]. The three kingdoms of Nobatia, Makuria and Alwa converted to Christianity[11]. The schismatic struggles between the Monophysite Kingdoms of Nobatia and Alwa and the Kingdom of Naqarra which followed the Melekite doctrine "did not take place without serious harm to the peace of the community at all levels". Religious divisions were one of several contributory causes to the decline of the Christian Nubian Kingdom[12].
This Christian era again produced a sort of homogeneous culture mainly based on agriculture, and the introduction of the *sagia*, waterwheel, made the difficult land north of the Second Cataract available for irrigation. Faras, the capital of Nobatia, became a thriving city and the frescoes of Faras Cathedral show a diverse and rich material culture if we are to judge by the elaborate robes and vestments of the Bishops and the border patterned Byzantine style robes

The ruler of Nobatia wearing a horned headdress

of the princes[13]. However, a note of caution must be sounded in that the Byzantine art tradition which influenced this Monophysite church at the time was notoriously rigid. It is not certain how far the local princes wished to be portrayed looking like their Byzantine counterparts, or whether they did in fact own such garments, and if so, whether they were locally made. The art of weaving intricately designed, coloured borders had flourished in Egypt by this time. To some extent the coloured woven border is still a striking feature of traditional weaving in the Sudan and Ethiopia today, where it forms a principal striking feature of the national costume.In the Faras frescoes we are fortunate to find two representations of lay people. One shows a procession of Nubians, with distinctly dark faces and long, long-sleeved white robes remarkably similar to the *jallabiya* of today[14].

In the great Nativity scene[14], the soldiers on horseback wear long tunics, caps, white trousers and dark leather footwear. The thieves wear short dark loincloths. The shepherds are dark in colour and probably representative of the Bedouins living on the fringe of the Nubian settled area; they wear bi-coloured tall caps and short loincloths, and across their chests are green, fringed sashes which fall semi-circularly on each side – not unlike the crossed *tob* worn by many Bedouin Arabs of the Sudan today.

One of the shepherds is leaning backwards on his stick in a manner akin to the Hadendawa shepherds of today. In the Passion scene, dark-skinned soldiers with African features are wearing long tunics girt at the hips, white trousers and dark footwear[16].

Another legacy from the Christian era is the horned headdress symbolic of royalty, seen in the Faras frescoes and on the Eparch from the church at Abd al Qadir[17]. Indeed, this symbolic double horn motif recurs again and again in

An old dervish wearing a horned cap

Sudanese history[18] and is still retained in the form of *tagiya um garnen*, a headgear worn by some dervishes in parts of the Blue Nile Province at the Sufi ritual praise singing *zikr*.
The cross as a symbol of protection still appears in many aspects of Nubian folk art[19]. It is sometimes marked in mud on the bride's forehead and is seen marked in charcoal or *kohl* on the foreheads of new-born babies to this day in Al Damer and elsewhere in the riverain Sudan. A gold cross is often worn under the clothes, on a thread around the neck, by Sudanese Muslim women who are said to have been possessed by a *zar* spirit, demanding that it be worn, but the cross is not visible[20].
Excavations of Christian tombs in Nubia just north of the Egyptian border revealed female bodies buried wearing a skirt of leather thongs, the *rahat*, which survives in central Sudan as part of the symbolic wedding paraphernalia and is still worn by young girls in many parts of south-western Darfur.

The Arab penetration

In AD 657 the Nubians drew up the Baqt Treaty with the Muslim Arabs of Egypt led by Abdallah ibn Saad, which allowed for the building of a mosque in Dongola and arrangements for trading activities. This treaty remained in force for six hundred years until the end of the Fatimid period. Increasingly, Juhaina Arabs[21] started to penetrate the Nubian Desert, Dongola and the Nile Valley in small tribal groups looking for lebensraum and pasturage for their flocks. They easily and quickly married Nubian women and through the local matrilineal system, whereby a boy inherits his maternal uncle, and through the Arab patrilineal system, through which sons inherit their fathers, their sons succeeded to tribal leadership and landownership. Thus broke up the cultural and religious life of the two northern Christian kingdoms. Dongola, which had so much flourished as a capital with brick houses and palaces with domes during the Christian era had been ruined by successive Mamelouk invasions and punitive expeditions. But there still remained Alwa which extended from Kabushiya to Sennar. During the 15th century the Arabs penetrated southwards till they completely overran the Gezira between the Blue Nile and the White Nile, and dominated its population and developed the Arab town of Arbaji while other Arab groups coming from the east from Hijaz penetrated the Butana. With the fall of Alwa in AD 1504, priestly robes and vestments, and the social system based on a royal court, priestly theocracy and the ritual language (initially Greek, then Coptic and Nubian),

disappeared, to be taken over by the more egalitarian Arab social system. It can be assumed that one of the contributions of the Arabs to the development of Sudanese costume at that time was the turban, 'the crown of the Arabs', and with the spread of Islam the idea that post-pubertal women should be covered as much as possible.

The Funj period

Different theories exist concerning the origins of the Funj, who appeared suddenly from the south and set up a kingdom in Sennar which developed into a far-reaching federation of tribes, known as *al sultana al zarqa*, the Black Sultanate. At its height, it stretched between the Second Cataract to the borders of the Ethiopian Empire, historically known as Abyssinia, and eastwards to the port of Suakin on the Red Sea. The Funj gained an ascendancy over the Gezira by allying themselves with the non-Arab indigenous elements. When James Bruce visited the Sennar court in 1772, he saw Shilluk cultural elements: the presence of powerful pagan priests, including one whose duty was the ritual killing of the degenerating king and the enthronement of his successor[22]. All this existed side by side with typically Arab cultural features such as magnificent horses of the old Saracen breed, and a whole troop of cavalry equipped with chainmail, copper headpieces and thick, protective gloves. These Funj extended their kingdom by conquering neighbouring tribes and deposing their chiefs, then either reinstalling them or other close relatives, to rule their own people as vassals of the Funj king. These vassals had to send an annual tribute to the Funj and their rule was endorsed by the sending of certain regalia from the capital Sennar, of which the *tagiya um garnen*, the horned cap already referred to as a sign of royalty in the Faras frescoes, was the main symbol of royal authority. The chief rival of the central Funj government was the *Mekdom* of Gerri, around Jebel Gerri, 30 miles south of Khartoum, held by the Sheikhs of Abdallab who had taken over the chieftainship and the royal gold-necklaces regalia of the last Christian king of Soba. Towards the end of the Funj period, the Abdallab moved their capital to Halfayat al Muluk. This town is of particular interest to our study as its principal industry, according to Bruce[23], was the manufacture of "a very coarse cotton cloth called *dimour* which served for currency throughout the lower parts of Atbara". Theodoro Krump in 1701[24] also mentions it as *tub thamur*. This is the first instance of the term *tob* whose etymology comes from the Arabic meaning of both cloth and clothes, appearing in Sudanese historical records. Both

A king of Fazogli, early 19th century, wearing a horned headdress

Krump and Bruce give us detailed descriptions of the clothes worn by the kings of Sennar and the Sheikhs of Gerri. Their description proves that many luxury items had been imported to the court of Sennar from India and through the trade routes of the two Red Sea ports, Suakin and Massawa, controlled at that time by the Funj. However, neither of them tells us anything about the folk costume of the ordinary people. Bruce describes the *wazir* Adlan, a minister who "had on a long drab-coloured camblet gown lined with yellow satin and a camblet cap like a headpiece with two short points that covered his ears". Here again was the famous horned cap[25]. The distinct contrast which Bruce observes between the effete overdressed king with his huge harem of overfed wives, and his more austere and pious *wazir*, highlights for us a recurring theme in Sudanese political and cultural life of two opposing poles of attraction: that of worldliness, pomp and show as portrayed by the kings and *meks*, and the contrasting pole of attraction as embodied in the revered holy men, the *fekis* and the *fugara* such as those who protected the travellers Bayard in 1705 and Burckhardt in 1817, whose caravans they escorted from Al Damer to the borders of Shendi through robber-infested country.
Krump also describes another kind of *murabitoon*[26] whom he calls Kabalists – "they have special food and clothes, they say their prayers... day and night... in Sennar and other places... the *faqire* – cooing like pigeons in the public square for two to three hours on end. They bend their bodies up and down... sometimes assuming the most abominable postures".

Berber and Shendi in the last two decades of the Funj Empire

In his 'Travels in Nubia', Burckhardt has some interesting passages about Berber and Shendi, providing clues about items of clothing worn there around 1813[27]. For example, about the women of Berber he says that, "even those of the highest rank always go unveiled, and young girls are often seen without any covering whatever, except a girdle of the leathern tassels about their waists, the *rahat*. Many, both men and women, blacken their eyelids with *kohl* or antimony, but the custom is not so general as in Egypt. The women of the higher classes, and the most elegant of the public women, throw over their shirts white cloaks with red linings of Egyptian manufacture, made at Mehalla al Kubra in the Delta. Both sexes are in the almost daily habit of rubbing their skins with fresh butter... The perfumed grease, which is made use of only upon extraordinary occasions like rites of passage is a preparation of sheep's fat mixed with soap musk, pulverised sandalwood, *senbal* and *mahleb*, called *dilka*"[28].

Around the 1970s in Berber and riverain Sudan, *kohl* was still worn by women but not by men; the leather *rahat* was retained only as a vestigial ritual garment in wedding ceremonies beneath the *fustan*, the dress, which may in itself be the 'shirt' referred to. As for the white cloak with red linings, this is hard to identify, but I shall attempt to explain it later in reference to the Shendi market. Berber women nowadays, are known for being very conservative and until very recently went veiled with the end piece of the *tob* brought across the mouth – the *bullama*. Presumably they have been doing so at least since the time of the Emir of Berber, Mohamed Al Kheir (1884–1897), who was a very pious and strict supporter of the Mahdi, and during whose reign women were compelled to veil in public.

The following information provided by Burckhardt about Shendi[29] is most interesting in that he listed all the different merchandise handled at the daily and weekly markets there at this great crossroads of caravans coming to and from Egypt, Sennar, Kordofan, Darfur, Suakin, Jeddah and the historic Abyssinia.

Perfumes and cosmetics

Burckhardt mentions "sandalwood imported from India" used for *dilka*, the perfumed paste referred to above, "much of which is carried to Sennar", and with regards to the antimony *kohl*, that "in the open country small pieces of antimony often answer the purpose of currency, as the peasants' wives will always readily barter for it".

Cloth

"Chief imports of Egyptian manufacture are *takas*, a sort of coarse cambric, dyed blue, with which the women, especially the Bedouin women, line their best cloaks. It is sold in small pieces... and is principally bought up by the Kordofan merchants". Again, this word 'lining' is misleading in Burckhardt and this blue-dyed cloth could possibly be simply the indigo *tob al zarag* still popular throughout the Sudanese countryside for women engaged in rough work. "White cotton stuffs with red borders, made in Mehella al Kubra, in the Delta: they are worn by the great people especially at Sennar". Perhaps this white cloth with red borders is the same as that mentioned at Berber, in which case the word 'lining' is misleading and 'bordered' or 'striped' could give a clearer description of a garment which could be the predecessor of the *tob* known today as *farda*. This type of *tob* always has a coloured border and most of it is woven nowadays in Shendi.

Milayas

"A blue striped cotton cloth, in which the women of distinction wrap themselves when they sleep". Until about the 1950s, Sudanese women wrapped themselves for sleeping in a striped cloth called *firka*, after which time the *fustan al nom*, or the nightdress, became more common. The blue, striped cotton cloth was also the more popular cloth worn as a *gurgab*, a waist to ankle-length wrapper worn by Sudanese women below the *fustan* and *tob*. In Egypt, the word *milaya* means a woman's outer cloak, but in the Sudan, this word has only been used to describe a bed sheet. Linen "is made at Assiut and Manfaloot and is in great request for shirts, but is too dear to be commonly worn". Linen is the material worn by the ancient Egyptians and throughout Europe was the favoured material for garments worn close to the skin for which it became synonymous. Its production and its use has gradually given way to cotton in the Nile Valley as well as all over Europe.

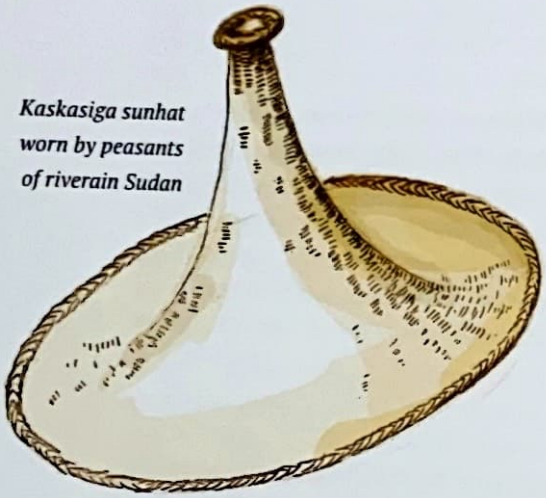
Other stuffs

"The Darfur caravans also take from Egypt, as presents to kings and other great persons, scarlet cloth, some velvet, satin, and gold embroidered stuffs, of the lighter kind from Lyons and Florence together with a variety of English calicoes and cambric". The exporting of English calicoes and cambric reflects the effect of the Industrial Revolution which in the 19th century was turning Lancashire into the world's leading centre of production of cotton goods. This in itself ultimately affected the history of the Sudan when the Sudan Gezira Scheme was established in 1908, in partnership between Manchester cotton buyers and the Sudan Government.

Beads

"The most common are small wooden beads" bought up by the Bedouin and other peasants. "Others... are made of kernels of the *doum* (Hyphaene thebaica) palm and are worn by those who wish to distinguish themselves by an appearance of sanctity. A variety of a red and black colour are imported from Jerusalem. There is hardly a man, woman or child, without a string or two of beads round the neck, or arm, or in their hands (the *sibha*, rosary beads)". "Glass beads (*kharraz*) have not the same currency here as they have in Abyssinia and Darfur ... The Souakin merchants import into Shendi a species of beads called *reysh* which are bought up exclusively by the Kordofan merchants ... from the East Indies... they are perforated balls of

coloured agate". "Coral, (*marjan)* of a bad kind is brought in small quantities; the tribes of the chiefs adorn their necks with it, and also with amber... Of amber, the transparent kind only is in request". "Silver trinkets for female ornaments, as bracelets, earrings, etc.: of these Darfur caravans take off considerable quantities from Egypt". All these items of beads are still being sold in Omdurman market by some old Sudanese women specialising in the supplies for Sudanese wedding ceremonies and other rites of passage, and by the Fellata (Fulani) tradesmen who deal in these items in bigger quantities. The amber which they trade in is not the transparent Baltic amber, but the opaque, less valuable African amber in rather irregular shapes.



Kaskasiga sunhat worn by peasants of riverain Sudan

In addition to itemising all the articles, Burckhardt also gives one or two descriptions of the people appearing at the great Shendi markets held on Fridays and Saturdays to which, apart from the great caravans, locals travelled from as far as three or four days' distance. "Some individuals of a tribe of Jaaliyin... appeared at the market with hats on their heads made of reeds; they were high and pointed with broad rims and were tied under the chin with a leather thong. They are worn by both men and women". Such hats are still to be seen worn by older women coming to market in Tengasi. "About a dozen shoe makers, or rather sandal-makers from the country, work for these two days in the market and will make a pair of sandals at an hour's notice. The works in leather are very prettily done. The leather is tanned with the *garad* (seeds) or pulse of the acacia *sunut*". "There are no weavers at Shendi, but all the women and grown up children, and many of the men, are seen with a

distaff constantly in their hands, spinning cotton yarn which they sell to the people of Berber... Cotton is cultivated in this neighbourhood and is a general produce of all countries on the banks of the Nile, although nowhere in any great quantity except at Al Damer and about Sennar"[30].

The Turkiya

The year 1821, the year in which the last Funj king, King Badi, came out from Sennar and submitted to the invading army of Ismail Pasha, is considered by A.J. Arkell as the end of medieval Arab kingdoms in the Sudan when "the ancient history of the Sudan may be said to have ended and the modern era to have begun". The period of Egyptian occupation from 1820–1881 is often referred to as the Turkiya (Turkish time) which is rather misleading because the Sudan was not in fact closely connected with the Turkish influence of the Ottoman Empire. Sudan was a dependency of a dependency, with Mohamed Ali Pasha and the Khedivial Court itself breaking away from Turkey. The Khedivial armies and administrative personnel who came to the Sudan in those years were mostly men with little homogeneous culture; to quote Richard Hill, "their small numbers and their deficiency in the arts of civilisation, combined with the climate, preclude the establishment of any permanent Turkish culture in the Sudan"[31].
Nevertheless, there are a few items of Sudanese costume surviving today which seem to have definite Turkish origins[32]. The Mamelukes reached the Sudan before the Khedivial armies, but they were few and they established themselves in Nubia and Dongola as a rather exclusive ruling body. Neither their style of life nor their way of dress was taken up by the local inhabitants. Nevertheless, Burckhardt writes that, "since the Mamelukes established themselves in Dongola, every Egyptian caravan brings to Shendi some articles of Mamelouk dress; clothes and shoes, which are purchased by the Dongola merchants". It may be that the tendency of some Nubians and Dongolawis to wear the crossed-over *guftan* dates to that time. The garment could still be seen in the eighties in the Sudan as the uniform of hotel – predominantly Dongolawi or Nubian – waiters.
The way in which the Sudan was more consistently influenced by Turkish ways was not so much along the path of the Khedivial armies from the north to the south of the Nile Valley, but from the Red Sea port of Suakin, in which the population consisted of a blend of Hadramautis, descendants of Turkish soldiers, merchants and seamen. Suakin shows many elements of

A Dongolawi waiter seen at the Grand Hotel in Khartoum in the 1970s

Turkish architecture common to other Red Sea ports. Some Bedouin tribes of eastern Sudan adopted from the Turks the very wide trousers known by them as *boja*. Before this the Bedouin tribes in the hinterland of Suakin wore only a single seamless garment, called *garin*, described thus by Burckhardt[33] in 1814: "they have however one dress which is seldom seen in other parts of Nubia it consists of a long piece of cambric, one end of which is wrapped round the loins, while the other, thrown across the breast and left shoulder, hangs loosely down over the back leaving the legs and the greater part of the upper body, entirely naked... added a handsome pair of sandals, three or four large amulets hanging over the left elbow... thick and bushy hair, white with grease, and a long wooden skewer sticking in it to scratch the head with". Since that time these camel-breeding people have adopted from the Turks the *boja* and the *sideri* waistcoat. These very wide Turkish trousers can still be found today in very widely scattered parts of the old Ottoman empire, such as Tunisia, Albania, Malta, Bosnia, Cyprus, Syria and Lebanon, where it is especially favoured by the very conservative Druze. From Suakin and spreading westwards from eastern Sudan and all along the Nile Valley and in western Sudan, these baggy trousers were

called *sirwal* and proved to be a useful garment for male camel, horse and donkey riders. In eastern Sudan these Turkish trousers are worn much longer than their Western counterparts; all the way down to the ankle, with between 2.5 to 4 metres of cloth going into the making of the voluminous fold, hanging from the *tikka*, the decorated cord which holds them above the hips.

Another item of Turkish costume is the *markub*, leather shoes with pointed upturned toes and an ornamental pointed tongue on the uppers. These do not seem to have come so much from Suakin, for the people there have their own styles of sandals still commonly worn in eastern Sudan. But the Turkish style of *markub* must have come from the direction of Egypt. A wooden cast of such a pointed shoe is to be seen in the Khalifa's Museum in Omdurman, and by the time this study was undertaken, one shoemaker in Village 15 in Khashm al Girba who took his wooden casts from Wadi Halfa with him at the Resettlement still made Turkish *markubs* on request. Another shoemaker was seen making a pair of these in Suq Tamboul in January 1975[34]. Other shoemakers in the Sudan used to make a modified version of *markub* for women of soft orange leather. The pointed tongue on the upper was retained in fashion with some shoemakers in Darfur.

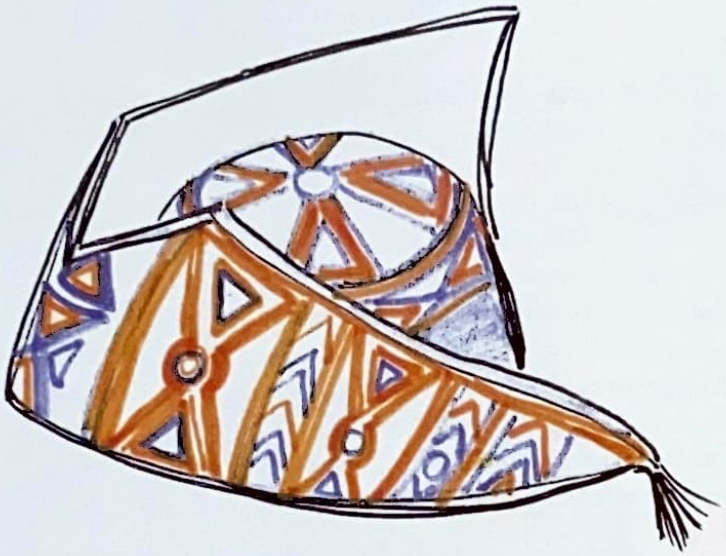
The Mahdiya (1881–1898)

The Turkiya and the Mahdiya together formed the period for the consolidation of what could now be called Sudanese folk costume. The increased pacification of the country during the Turkiya and wider organisation of trade during the time of Egyptian rule facilitated the importation of more varieties and styles of clothes. The Mahdiya on the other hand, as well as being a period of puritanical reform and rejection of foreign ways, proved to be one of national consolidation as well as of isolation, so that at one and the same time a social and religious limit was placed on imported styles from any external source, while the economic and political stringencies of the era imposed a sort of sobering-up and discipline on the clothes of both sexes throughout the Mahdist state. In fact, what began as a sort of voluntary group identification ended up by being a state uniform. Thus Giuseppe Cuzzi[35] recorded that the Jaaliyin, who were not amongst the first tribes to join the Mahdiya, added patches to their clothes when the *jihad*[36] spread to Berber. These coloured patches on the knee-length *jibba* of *damour* originated with the Sufi practices of various dervish groups in the Sudan who affected to wear patched garments as a

The jibba of Osman Digna has beautifully balanced patches on sleeves, sides, front and back, with highly ornamental insert pockets at the sides. Another jibba exhibited at the Khalifa's House Museum shows that not only did the maker produce a work of art with its evenly-placed patches and ornamental neck, and decorated pockets and sleeves, but he even had imitated the original coarse stitching that would have characterised a garment patched out of poverty; large crude stitches appear around the outer edge of the facing at the neck patch and form an ornamental framework of decorative evenly-placed black stitches. The maker of the jibba was so proud of his work of art that he embroidered his name on the pocket.

sign of ritual poverty. These special Sufi uniforms were described by Krump as being worn by a special kind of *murabitoon* in the Kingdom of Dongola at Debba[37], and they survive today in the uniforms of the 'dancing dervishes' at such places as Um Gurun and Um Dawan Ban, some way inland from the east bank of the Blue Nile. A close examination of some of the *jibbas* preserved[38] from the Mahdists captured at the Battle of Omdurman and other campaigns of the re-conquest shows that this garment developed a long way away from the poor garment patched with odd bits out of necessity. The *jibbas* in the Khalifa's House Museum include a very neat child's patched *jibba* with a curious split on the side of the neck, such as that which appears portrayed on the tomb of Viceroy Huy (1355 BCE) of Nubians bringing gifts to the Pharaoh. The painstaking intricacy and artistic quality of workmanship of *jibbas* in this museum show that even during the comparatively short span of the Mahdist State, what started out as a pious symbol of poverty and austerity, developed into a highly stylised folk art form.

Also very elaborate and ornamental are some of the padded *jibbas* worn under chainmail by some Mahdi's Emirs and their cavalry men. Two of these, displayed in the Khalifa's Museum, are in the patched Mahdist style. Two others, however, are in very elaborated striped silk – one of them was captured from Wad Al Nijumi when he was killed on his attempted invasion of Egypt. It is in typical Egyptian blue and white striped silk known as *shahiya*, the tea dress. This garment has a curious padded flap hanging down at the back of the neck, lined with dark blue. Another curiosity is the complete Emir's outfit found by General Stuart Wortley in 1897 on board a Mahdist gunboat captured at Berber. This very rich and elaborate outfit is a marvellous find because it is so complete and in such good condition that we can glean from it not only a good idea of the splendour of a Mahdist Emir in his full battle array, but also, what the Funj cavalry nobles wore, for here is the recurrent *tagiya um garnen* in all its splendour. There is also a complete suite of chainmail dating from the time of the crusaders. The outer silk façade of the padded *jibba* is in the red, yellow and brown striped silk known and favoured by the Beni Amer tribe, which they call *abd al ghani*. In addition, there is an interesting pair of gauntlets, leather-bound above the wrist and with chainmail protection of padded material, the façade of which is made of cotton cambric printed in a pattern of black and red flowers and stripes, fashionable in the early Victorian period. The outfit also includes a padded *khodha*, a helmet, as well as an elaborately embroidered *tagiya um garnen*.



Tagiya um garnen
from the Khalifa's House
Museum in Omdurman

Fortunately for our record there are many authentic photographs in this museum and elsewhere of Mahdist soldiers. Although not all of them are wearing elaborately patched *jibbas*, they share certain clothing items in common – items which were worn by the Ansar, as followers of the Mahdi are called, until very recently. These are the short knee-length *jibba* with round neck and *sirwal* to mid-calf, turban with one end hanging down and a light *tob* worn tightly around the waist and over one shoulder and tucked again into the waist at the back – presumably as a sort of padding for protection against the rubbing rifle or spear if laid across the shoulder.

Apart from the uniform worn by the Ansar at the Mawlid (the celebrations of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday) and other celebrations, whose number has considerably reduced since the Gezira Aba events in April 1970[39], other clothing features which survived from the Mahdist time include the round-necked reversible *jallabiya* with a 'breast' pocket at the back and the front and the turban worn with a tail hanging down the back of the neck. This *jallabiya*

A follower of the Mahdi, with his turban wrapped in the Ansar style

is commonly worn in the Sudan today, and Mahdist folklore tradition asserts that the pocket derives from the Mahdist practice of turning their shirts back to front when they were dirty, as Mahdists were too busy to wash them in time of war and campaigning or in the privations of desert marches.

The puritanical effect of the Mahdi's reform movement on women's clothes was very long-lasting indeed. We read in Cuzzi[40] that by Mahdist decree "the women had to veil their faces" in the streets of the towns. Now there has never been in the Sudan – except amongst the Rashaida – such a thing as a face veil or *yashmak* – so the women of the Mahdiya had to veil their faces with their *tobs* which they did by drawing them across the face tightly and then tucking them in by the cheek; the remaining yard or two fell heavily over the head. This style – the *bullama* – remained the correct style for Sudanese women in public space until the 1950s when its abandonment was pioneered by the earliest women students of the University College[41] – it is still maintained in some provincial areas and resorted to in times of dust storms, fasting and toothache.

Nubian Dress

The Nubians are of especially urgent interest in this study because of the inevitable cultural changes accelerated by their removal from their ancient homeland in the Nile Valley gorge between the First and Second Cataracts and their resettlement in Khashm al Girba following the formation of Lake Nasser behind the new High Dam at Aswan, 1964.

The emphasis will be on the unique female costume called the *jarjara*, but before going on to this, a word may be said en passant about the costume of Nubian men. Indeed, their costume reflects the fact of them being much more mobile than women. A very high percentage of Nubian men have for many years gone north to Egypt and further south into the Sudan, frequently in search of employment and trade. There has always been a shortage of land in this area, hemmed in by the Nubian Desert on both east and west. Apart from mercenaries in early Caliphate armies and migrant labourers, some Nubians have always been involved in the caravan trade between Egypt and the Sudan's interior lying between the Nile and the Red Sea ports such as Aydhab and Suakin. Smuggling is an activity not unknown to them in their former homeland, which they are now able to pursue from Halfa al Jadida, New Halfa, on the Kassala-Eritrea route.

The costume of Nubian men

Nubian men's costume has thus often been a reflection of Cairo and Alexandria fashions: low-necked *jallabiyas*, embroidered waistcoats and long kaftans made of *shahiya*[1], even long overcoats in the colder weather – the winter in Nubia can sometimes be very cold indeed. A man in his forties from Sukkot[2] told me at the time of research that in his early childhood some boys in his area wore *arragi*, a short white tunic with a double thickness of material machine-stitched over the chest as a protection against the cold. For the same reason, the slit opening, called *gabbi*, which allowed the head to pass through the neck opening, was made to one side so as not to leave an open gaping exposing the chest.

In as much as the Nubian men's costume is very much blended into the average dress of men in the rest of riverain Sudan, it is dealt with in the description of Sudanese men's dress of the central riverain Sudan in Chapter V. It is interesting to note that some Nubian shopkeepers in Halfa al Jadida began to dress like eastern Sudanese men around them: the Shukriya and some

of the migrant Beja men. This costume consists of a short white tunic, wide trousers called *sirwal boja* and a long waistcoat called *sideri*. In old Halfa, the Nubians used to wear much shorter *sideris* with many buttons, derived from Egyptian styles. These were worn not just for show but often for the extra warmth around the chest during the cold northern winters. Nubian waiters in the hotels and restaurants of the capital, and in the restaurant carriages on Sudan Railways, can often be distinguished by their especially elegant way of winding their turbans. This turban is built up very high with very neat straight sides and looks in outline much like the headdress of the famous Queen Nefertiti, even in the way it curves over the ears. Nubian men, being much more mobile than their womenfolk, have been the ones who, on returning from Khartoum or Cairo, have introduced new items of clothing and jewellery to their women who otherwise tended to remain very cut off from the world of fashion in remote and rather inaccessible villages.

The Nubian woman's jarjara

It is the very typical women's dress of this area – the *jarjara* which is the special subject of study in this chapter. This long, black trailing dress is quite distinct from anything worn by women either immediately to the north or to the south of this area, but is more similar in shape and colour to the dress of the most recent comers to the Sudan from the Arabian peninsula, the Rashaida, and to that of the Bedouin women of Sinai[3]. The existence of some such long trailing women's garments much earlier in Arabia was mentioned in the poetry of Umar ibn Abi Al Rabiah of the early Umayad period, who says, "To kill and be killed is our destiny. The pretty ones, theirs is to drag their skirt tails".

Unfortunately, this very distinctive item of Nubian women's dress has been doomed to obsolescence, accelerated by Nubian women's resettlement in the Khashm al Girba area and the adjustment and integration of the younger generations into the Sudan's bid for national unity. In fact, at the time of research (1972–74) very few wearers of the *jarjara* under middle age could be found in that area. However, the spread of girls' education had begun to influence girls form the Halfa area even before this mass relocation, as they travelled to the capital Khartoum for secondary and higher education and teacher's training. A measure of the old-group solidarity and conservative attitude of the women remaining in the home area was once expressed to me by a woman who told me "Oh so and so is very forward; she even wears

This garment worn with great style and dignity has a beautiful silhouette. Women used to go to wedding ceremonies in groups – singing along as they went. Each one would carry on her head, her shallow aginde basket with its matching showir cover. The basket had an extra ring woven into its bottom to fit firmly on the head. Each basket contained its carrier's contribution of flour or grain to the wedding feast. These widely sloping baskets on their heads must have complemented the shape of the spreading outline of the jarjara trail at ground level, offsetting the otherwise vertical effect of this long black garment.

A married woman of Wadi Halfa in 1960

The word jarjara is not Nubian but derives from the Arabic word jar meaning 'to drag'. And indeed this garment is very remarkable for its long exaggerated trail, at least a metre in length, which sweeps along the ground and is intended to wipe out the woman's footmarks so that she cannot be traced by the devil.

the *tob* and talks to her children in Arabic"[4]. The same informant told me that when Nubian ladies who had "gone to the Sudan" returned by train to the Halfa district on vacation or family visits, they would open their cases at the last desert station before reaching Halfa Dagheim halt, get out their *jarjaras* and put them on, and fold their black *tobs* away. To get down at Halfa Dagheim station still wearing a *tob* was considered very outré until the late 1940s. All forms of the *jarjara* however simple or elaborate their basic shape, had a large curved piece of material sewn on at the back lower extremity forming a long trail. It is this feature which gives the *jarjara* its unique character and its name – *jar* in Arabic means 'to drag'. A veil called *benati* from the Arabic meaning 'pertaining to girls' is worn over the woman's head. When worn with the black *jarjara* the veil was never white – a white veil might be worn by a woman over her coloured underdress solely inside her house when saying her prayers. The many coloured veils in these groups of wedding guests must have looked a gay contrast to the mass of black clothes. A favourite colour for this veil is a certain peacock blue – known by the Nubians as *dessi*[5]. Black veils, however, are always worn by widows and the total effect is very sombre indeed. In addition to this, on much longer trips which might mean walking an hour or so in the sun, women would carry a *tob* of black voile – about 4 metres long. This would most often be folded up and placed on top of their heads to protect it and their shoulders from the sun. Sometimes, if they were cold, the black *tob* would be opened up partly and used as a wrap around the shoulders. And if such a trip involved a night or two away from home, the woman had her own *tob* with which to cover herself at night.

From a male garment to a female garment

Different theories have been put forward about the origins of this *jarjara* and its development to its present-day form. Earlier travellers at the beginning of the 19th century, such as Frédéric Cailliaud and John Lewis Burckhardt, remarked on the paucity of the Nubian dress[6]. Burckhardt recorded that the Nubians mostly went "naked except that the men had a rag twisted round their middle,[7] and the girls tied round their waist a string of leather tassels". This seems to describe the type of *rahat* called *beyye*[8]. This skirt made of leather thongs is mentioned amongst the exports of the Sudan in Turkish times[9] and it is still commonly worn in some parts of Kordofan and Darfur. It continues to retain a wider symbolic usage in Sudanese traditional wedding regalia of the bride. Other travellers later in the 19th century were more complimentary.

For example Joseph Bonomi[10] describes a "one piece cut in two and sewn together, made the outer garment, which the natives alone know how to cast about their bodies with a Phidian grace... or this piece of cloth is made up into a tunic with ample sleeves occasionally retained by passing a string over the shoulder". That same sort of wide-sleeved tunic has been known in this area for centuries and is borne out by the evidence of the frescoes uncovered by the Polish Archaeological Expedition's excavation of the Cathedral at Faras, so that the 'Phidian grace' noted by Bonomi is not without foundation. The garments worn by saints, bishops, priests and nobles in these frescoes bear witness to the cross-cultural influence of Greek culture from the time of the Ptolemies and through to that of the missionaries sent to Nubia by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian and his Empress Theodora. Actual examples of the kind of tunics worn at the beginning of the Coptic influence in Nubia can be seen in the Museum of Coptic Art in Old Cairo. The remains of a bishop Timothos, consecrated in 1374, were found in his tomb by Professor Plumley dressed in such a tunic[11].

Another remark by Bonomi suggests a curious contradiction to Marian Wenzel's theory[12] about the derivation of the *jarjara*. Wenzel says, "The *jarjara* with tucks and ruffled sleeves was clearly based on European garb of the late 19th century. It replaced the semi-nudity prevalent before then". However, the tunic described by Bonomi in a previous paragraph refers to a male garment and of the women he says, "a wider piece sometimes is worn by the women, acacia thorns serving as fibulae (pins), precisely like the bronze statues at Naples or the Iris of the Parthenon, with or without a second piece serving as a veil or wrapper cast over the former dress like in Greek statues: for as yet neither stockings nor stays, crinoline nor gloves are known beyond the latitude of Cairo". It seems that this tunic-like ancestor of the *jarjara*, sometime during the last century, made the transition from a male garment to what is now most definitely a female garment. It is described by Bonomi as a male garment in 1862, and yet Burckhardt in 1813 also noted that "the women have a coarse shirt thrown about them". This transition of a certain item of dress between one sex and another is not unknown and further research might point to an element of Islamic puritan reform in this phenomenon. Similar occurrences across the Sudanic savannah belt during the 19th century have produced the *buba* in Senegal and the voluminous gown worn by women in Bornu.

At the time of research, this simple tunic, which Nubian women call *jarjara koman* and which is the most austere form of four varieties of *jarjara* found in the Khashm al Girba area, still existed. One Nubian informant used the word *koman* in describing a garment formerly

worn by Nubian men called *koman bash*[13]. This very simple T-shaped garment with a mere slit at the front of the neck opening fastened by one button resembles to some extent the Nigerian *riga*. Bonomi mentions the quality of the Nubian cloth tunic "a strong piece of stuff of excellent cotton..." but like Burckhardt does not mention the colour of this 'coarse shirt'. The Nubians, however, have an interesting legend which indicates that at one time there must have been a transitional period of ambiguity in between men's and women's costume both in shape and in colour, and that both men and women wore white. There is an element both of a legendary quality and of credibility in this story but the fact remains that the *jarjara* has always been black as far as any present-day informants can remember. Furthermore when Nubian women take to wearing the *tob* in Khartoum they very often prefer black.

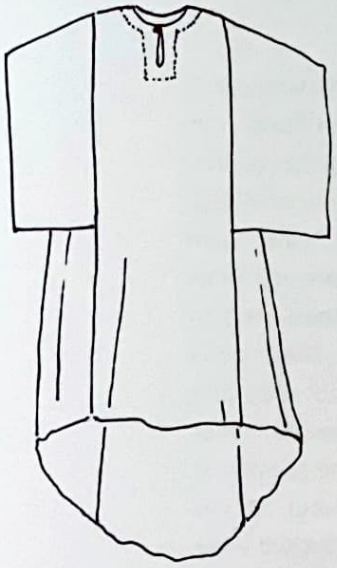
How the women's jarjara came to be black

It is told that around the year 1818 a certain Omda Dawud of Dagheim heard of a death in his Omodiya and came hurrying to the house of mourning. He was already old and also weak in eyesight. By mistake he entered in upon a group of women and contrary to his expectations, no man stood up and stretched his hands to say the Fatha prayer. After a silent pause of some time, a woman said "the men have all gone to the graveyard". So mortified and humiliated was the Omda Dawud by this incident, that he straight away decreed that from henceforth all the women in his Omodiya should wear black *jarjaras*.

Nubian jarjara styles in Wadi Halfa before the diaspora

Koman bashi

Amongst the four different kinds of *jarjara* noticed in the Khashm al Girba resettlement area, I observed the *koman bashi jarjara* worn by a rather impecunious widow in her late forties in Village 15. She made it herself from 4 metres of inexpensive black voile. There is a second version of the *koman,* which has very, very wide sleeves with no flounces and is considered the proper dress for widows. An example of this widows' *koman* was observed worn by a widow of about 90 years originating from Tinon Aman Island. This island was in Batn al Hajer – a rugged, almost inaccessible gorge of which Burckhardt wrote in 1813, "both men and women go naked, but the latter wear leather amulets round the neck, copper armlets and bracelets and silver earrings".



Jarjara koman worn by widows

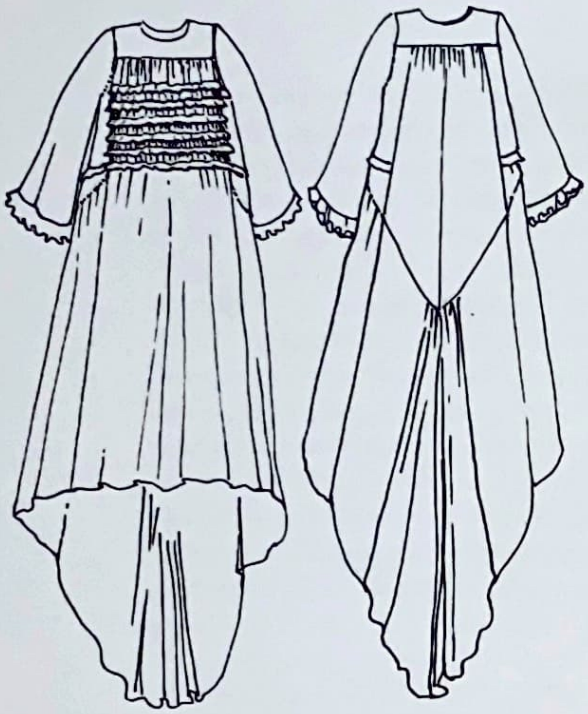
Jarjara worn by the Basalwa

Basalwa

The third kind of *jarjara* is that worn by the Basalwa women[14]. It is a border country garment for it is worn both in Upper Egypt and in Nubia and now in Khashm al Girba. In its basic shape it resembles the *merkasse jarjara*, but it differs in that its copious sleeves are fastened at the wrist with a deep-buttoned cuff[15]. The younger Basalwa women wear two of these black *jarjaras* one on top of the other – the inner one usually of a fairly thick muslin and the top one is of extremely transparent georgette, chiffon or nylon. It is purely decorative, and only the very boldest woman would wear it over her coloured dress without the second thicker inner *jarjara* as a lining.

Merkasse

The fourth type of *jarjara* noted is a most elaborate affair; it is called by the Wadi Halfa Nubians, *merkasse*[16]. It is made of black gauze – fairly transparent garment sometimes woven with bands of thicker and thinner weave. The material is an imported item and difficult to come by and most commonly plain black muslin is substituted for it. It is made up of 7 to 8 metres. This long voluminous garment is gathered into a yoke lined with the same material, with an oval-shaped neck opening called *sufra*[17]. Across the breast there are several horizontal tucks. The varying numbers of tucks used by different villagers form an



Merkasse jarjara (front and back)

interesting subdivision of local differences in this already regional costume and so form an interesting but discreet mark of group identity. In their present location, the people of Village 21[18], formerly of Halfa Dagheim, have three tucks and those in Village 15, formerly Jumei Sherg, have six tucks. In addition, there are also two or more tucks at knee level. These tucks are an important feature of decoration and help to give the garment extra weight across the breast and across the knees and to prevent the garment from suddenly blowing up too high in the wind. This elaborately tucked style is described by the Nubians as *tentanelli*. The sleeves are worn wide and loose with flounces at the end and occasionally one or two tucks at the elbow. In addition to the function of weighing down the garment and enabling the shortening or lengthening of the garment by letting out tucks or taking more in, these and the long trail form the pleasing horizontal feature in an otherwise vertically emphasised garment.

Further dress accessories

Under the *jarjara,* an ordinary cotton dress called *kitti* was usually worn, with a gathered skirt down to the mid-calf. It was made of plain white material in the case of widows, and otherwise a coloured print. In the younger women this underdress followed the changing

Elderly Nubian woman wearing boja trousers

styles as much as the dresses worn under the *tob* in the rest of riverain Sudan. Pilgrims and widows tended to wear long-cuffed sleeves and longer skirts to this garment. Much of the time in the house, this garment was worn without the *jarjara*, and with a short head veil, the *benati*. Until about the 1950s many older women also wore a long wrapper of striped material wrapped around the waist – known as the *gurgab* – under the skirt of the *kitti*.

At the time of this research, all women wore a type of knickers called *libas* as underwear, and they pronounced the name as *dibas*. One 90-year-old woman, however, was still wearing old-fashioned Turkish trousers made of a printed cotton material. Using up to 6 metres of material these were copiously gathered on a string at the waist. The material of the legs was cut longer than her own legs and the bottom of each was gathered on a string and tied above the calf just below the knee so that the extra material hung down in baggy folds. It is called by the Nubians *boja*[19]. The other wealthier widow informant, nearly as old as her, from Halfa Dagheim was proudly remembered by her relatives as being the first lady in her village to wear silk stockings brought by her husband from Egypt in the 1920s.

The Nubians have a word for shoes which they call *dir*. So footwear must have been common in this area for a very long time and indeed there are several varieties of footwear shown in the Faras murals[20]. My first attempts at finding an original Nubian shoe led to a shoemaker in Village 21. Unfortunately, in spite of having brought all the wooden moulds for such shoes at the time of resettlement, he had in fact let his wife feed the oven with them in 1972 owing to lack of demand. However, another shoemaker was found in the town of Halfa al Jadida who made a special pair of *dir* to order. These were beautifully made and sewn with fine thin leather thongs. The leather of the upper is in dark shiny red, and the thicker leather of the soles is yellow. They are of a typical Turkish design – with turned-up pointed toes, another decorative point coming up over the arch of the foot, and a third peak rising at the back of the heel. There is an illustration of a girl from Sennar wearing such shoes in Cailliaud's book. In January 1975, a shoemaker in Suq Tamboul was seen making a pair just like this for a male Shukriya customer. He called these shoes *abu zirra*.

Under the head veil, Nubians plaited their hair in a style called *shirafi*. In this style, a large, golden ring was worn at the centre parting, such as is still worn by women of the Beni Amer and the Hadendawa tribes. Nubian women call this ring *gusa rahman*[21]. It is thick and heavy and about a diameter of a florin. Burckhardt describes this style[22] but also mentions ornaments at the back of the head such as are still worn in Chad and Bornu. No such back ornaments were

mentioned during my visit. However, two widows from opposite extremes of socio-economic class showed me hair ornaments now in disuse, which they called *shil-shil*[23]. They said they had formerly worn them to look smart, *giyafa*, on festive occasions. The wealthier widow's *shil-shil* was a pair of a silver ring from which were suspended six silver chains, each 3 inches long, ending in little pear drop pieces of beaten silver. These pieces were called *beyye*[24] and were attached to the hair on each side of the temples and were meant to swing and tinkle particularly during the side to side swaying to their national dance, the *aragid*. The *shil-shil* of the poorer widow proved to be an ingenious concoction of parallel hanging macramé leather thongs with small rectangular bars of mother of pearl between them, threaded with some coral and some yellow beads. This elderly lady had long ago given up wearing this *shil-shil*, which was now broken. Her hair was plaited all over in parallel rows with no *gusa rahman* in the centre. On one side over her left ear she wore a different hair ornament: a small leather amulet attached with a pin – which she called *sho*[25].

Nubian ladies seemed to be quite conservative about their jewellery and it was common in Khashm al Girba to see ladies wearing items which had gone out of fashion in riverain Sudan twenty or thirty years earlier. For example, many still wore a choker called *matarig*[26] around the base of their neck. One typical *matarig* consisted of five parallel rows of agate interspersed with gold, double, cone-shaped beads called *jitti*. Another *matarig* was composed of flat, square hollow beads made of beaten gold threaded onto two parallel black cords – these beads they call *jakkid*, which means 'pressed'.

Another pectoral ornament worn by one informant was called by her *gushali*. It consisted of a silver Marie Therese thaler hung on red silk around the neck – it was said to have been 'demanded by the *zar*'[27]. Another lady wore a large pectoral ornament which she called *hafeedth*. It was made of a large, crescent shape of beaten and patterned silver and hung upside down with three chain pendants, one from each horn and one from the centre. Again the word *beyye* was used by several informants to describe a long necklace of cylindrical agates interspersed with pear-shaped agates. A long necklace made of large amber beads interspersed with imitation coral beads was also shown, brought as a present by the wearer's husband from Egypt. Several women wore open-ended silver bracelets which they call *lekik*[28]. Some ladies still wore a nose ornament – a small, thick gold ring closed by a tight-fitting coral or agate bead. Several ladies still possessed, but were no longer wearing, silver anklets which they call by the Arabic name *hijil*.

Nubian widow in 1974 displaying the jewellery she wore when younger

Facial tattooing in Nubia seems to be very common and as such, has a lot in common with the Bedouin women of the Arabian Peninsula and women in North Africa and the Fulanis. I saw many ladies with tattooed cheeks and chins in patterns of parallel vertical lines. Tattooing of the forehead is sometimes in the shape of a crescent. Other forehead tattoos are in the shape of a cross which is simply a very old survival from the days of Christian Nubia. The Nubians had a habit in their old homeland of arranging coloured plates and saucers in the shape of a cross over their doorways.

It is clear that most Nubian women were very cut off from the rest of the Sudan until the time of their resettlement. Their area was very inaccessible, as the railway line struck out right across the desert to Abu Hamed after leaving Wadi Halfa, bypassing the rest of the villages. To the north lay the forbidding Nubian desert and the only means of transport was by river. To the south the Batn al Hajer was a very rocky territory, difficult to access by truck. Thus their geographical, cultural and linguistic isolation tended to make the Nubian women slower in response to change than other women of the riverain Sudan along the railway line.

Rashaida Costume

Perhaps one of the most distinctive costumes in the whole of the Sudan, and certainly in eastern Sudan, is that of the Rashaida people – particularly the women and girls – which emphasises and proclaims their sense of group identity.

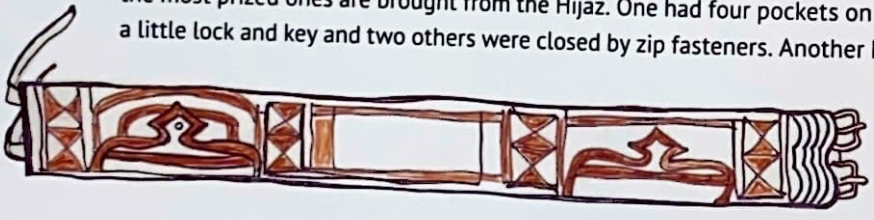
These people have not been very long established in the Sudan. According to their own oral tradition they came across the Red Sea in a mass movement around 1862[1], crossing the sea to the greener shores on the coast of the Sudan and Eritrea. Here they have continued to lead a nomadic life on the coastal plain. Some of them have penetrated further inland and camped far away from their point of entry to the hinterland on the right banks of the Nile in the region of Al Damer, Atbara and Berber. In the Red Sea Hills and in the Gash Delta, the Rashaida have camped on the fringes of the plantations all over the Khashm al Girba Scheme, where they do seasonal weeding and picking, and graze their animals after the harvest on the stalks and the fallow lands and on the canal banks. The main source of the Rashaida's wealth lies in the camel trade. They buy camels from the Shukriya and others and drive them all the way to Egypt where they sell them. Most of them fly back to the Sudan carrying their driving sticks, whips, and much of their wealth in cash stashed in special multi-pocketed belts with pouches. There is a good deal of speculation about just how wealthy the Rashaida really are. Certainly, their women are changing their silver for gold. Yet their way of life is extremely austere. Indeed, a visit to a Rashaida encampment reveals a life of very meagre resources in terms of comfort and diet. For the most part they sleep on the ground on skins or rush mats called *birish*, and there might be just one *angareb* in each household, a string bed, for the head of the family. Their tents are very simple structures made of goat's and camel's wool, spun and woven by their womenfolk. These tents are very low pitched during the *kharif*, the rainy season, and higher and more spacious in the *saif*, the hot dry summer season. I interviewed *qadi al urf* Ali Obeid, a judge of customary law of one of their chief sections at Al Rattaja, about their source of group identity and their attitude to their costume. The Rashaida look to the Hijaz as their real homeland with which they hold strong cultural ties. Many items of both male and female costume are still acquired from the Hijaz, and local substitutes are considered inferior.

The men of the Rashaida

An item of dress without which a Rashaida man would be scandalously incomplete is his enormous turban. Most often it is made of 6 metres of a creamy-coloured wool from Egypt. If wool is unobtainable, *damouriya*, *dabalan* or *shash* is used. As this is less bulky than wool, as much as 8 metres may be used. Its bulk provides the Rashaida man with excellent insulation against the sun and some shade for his face and neck, in addition to being the coverlet with which the Rashaidi will cover himself at night from mosquitoes and the cold desert night air. The Rashaida do not seem to have any special *tagiya*, a skull cap commonly worn on the head, on which to build this turban. When pressed for an answer as to what form of cap they might have originally had in the Hijaz, they replied they had none, but that the shawl was placed on the head and banded about with the *ugal*, a headband of thick cord, as worn by Saudi Arabians today.

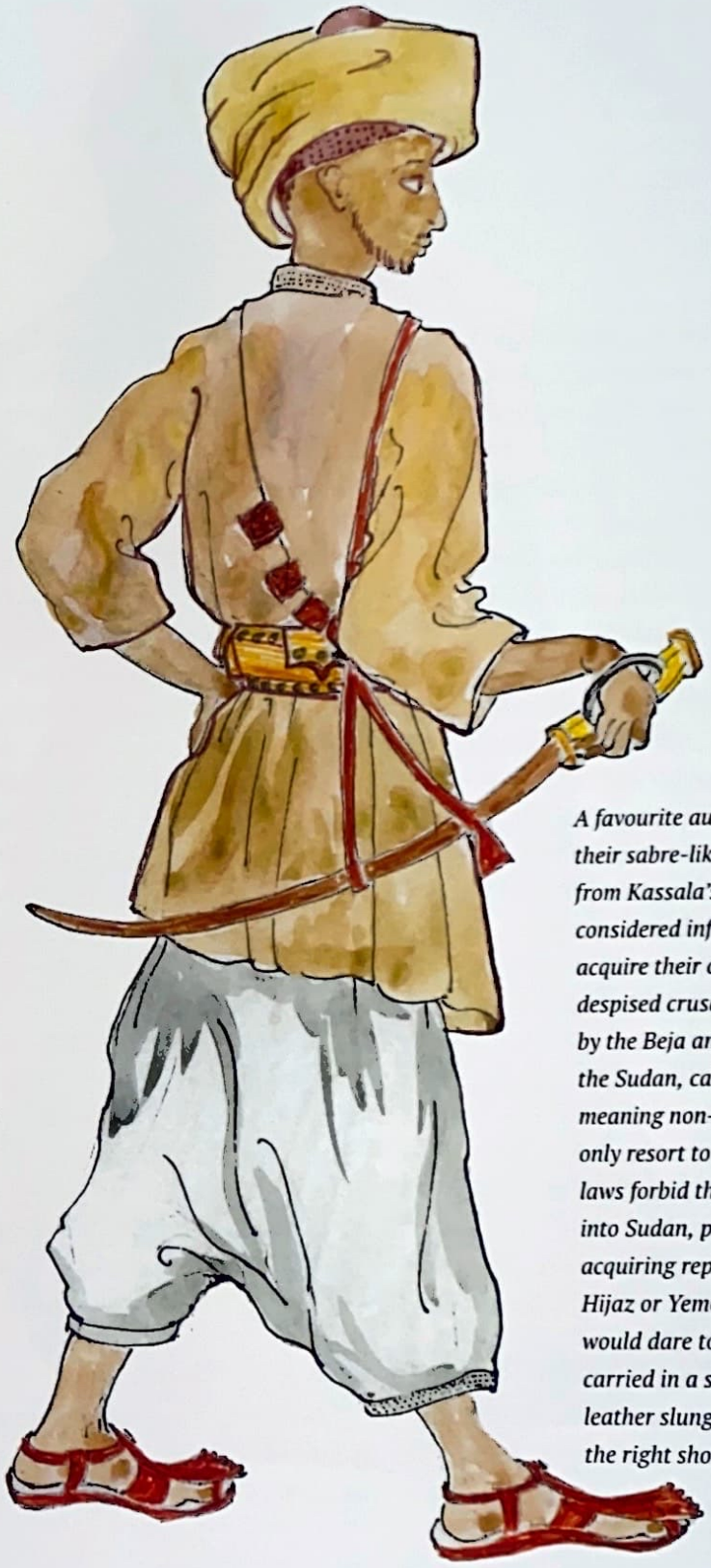
There is a typical shirt which the Rashaida men wear, either fastened in tightly by the *sibta* or hanging loosely over it – or without it when relaxing or while grazing their animals. This shirt is rarely pure white, but not as dirty as the Hadendawa garments. The Rashaida men seem to be able to attain a uniform shade of off-whiteness in all their clothes. The shirt which they call *tob* is tailored for them by special tailors, many of them Rashaida, in all the market towns which they frequent. It is usually of *dabalan* or *damouriya*. It has three quarter length sleeves and is worn to mid-calf length, sometimes shorter. This shirt, which is most distinctive to the Rashaida, has a high neckline and a little mandarin collar, reinforced with machine stitching called *targiba* with the two sides of the neck opening slit. More recently, this garment has been appearing in poplin, dyed a pale mauve like that of the Omanis. This is supposed to be fastened by buttons but very commonly only the top two corners are held together by a safety pin.

When travelling, all young Rashaida men wear distinctive belts outside or inside their shirts. In town, the belt conceals their bulging pockets and the *khanjar*, a dagger which is forbidden by law in towns, or maybe a knife stuck in it. This belt, called the *sibta*, is also a source of great pride and many fine samples are made in Kassala and Aroma by the Hadendawa – but the most prized ones are brought from the Hijaz. One had four pockets on it, two of these had a little lock and key and two others were closed by zip fasteners. Another had outside pockets



The distinctive character of the Rashaida turban is its bulkiness, shaped like "the rubber tyre of a car" according to Kassala residents. The men are consciously proud of their turbans, and womenfolk would make fun of one whose turban was not up to standard, since his apparent poverty reflected on the tribe. The Rashaida's saying that it is "better to cut off the heads than to knock off their turbans" reflects the link between the turban and the male pride and prestige, and knocking off another man's turban is considered a provocation to fight.

Across from the left shoulder or on his upper left arm, a Rashaida man may wear a leather thong with several leather pouched amulets containing protective religious texts against a variety of eventualities – his defensive spiritual weapons. Around the camp, or in centre of towns where arms are forbidden, a Rashaida man must carry a stick and a whip. To not do so would be considered cowardice and a shocking state of undress.



A Raishaida man in Kassala, 1974

A favourite authentic Hijazi item is their sabre-like sword. Imitations from Kassala's ironsmiths are considered inferior. Those unable to acquire their curved sword carry the despised crusader type blade used by the Beja and common throughout the Sudan, called by them ajami, meaning non-Arabic speaker. They only resort to this because strict laws forbid the import of arms into Sudan, preventing them from acquiring replacements from the Hijaz or Yemen. No Rashaida man would dare to be without a sword, carried in a scabbard of light brown leather slung on a leather strap on the right shoulder.

and a lining running the whole length inside, fastened by one long zip fastener along the top. With this the Rashaida man wears a long *sirwal*, fairly baggy trousers, but less so than those worn by their Beja neighbours. They are made in the same sample pattern as the *sirwal* common to this region, but there are little patches of black cloth strengthening the corners of the crutch. These patches are sometimes white, decorated with machine stitching of palm trees and crescents in black and white. The bottom of the leg is thickened and strengthened by rows and rows of machine stitching in white thread called *targiba*. The effect of this band causes the folds of the *sirwal* to fall somewhat differently from the *sirwal* of other people of eastern Sudan.

Little Rashaida boys at first wear simple white shirts to below the knees and then begin to wear short *sirwal* trousers when they are about 7 years old. At the earliest possible age they begin to carry sticks and are taught to herd the smaller domestic animals. As soon as a boy is about 10 or 12 and can be taken out with his father or older brother to distant pastures where the larger animals are, he can start wearing a little turban – this will usually be a remnant of an older person's bigger one. There are no rites of passage to mark off when a boy can progress to a more senior garment, and Rashaida boys are circumcised at around 3 to 4 years of age. However, it seems that they progress to more and more senior garments according to the achievements which win them status. A Rashaida young man will expect to earn his first *sibta* and his first big turban through his own herding and trading efforts.

The Rashaida wear various kinds of factory-made footwear but they do have a traditional kind of sandal still made in Kassala, called *zubeidi*[2]. Made of strong leather, they have a sole three layers thick. A small leather strap fits over four toes and another broader strap corners over the arch of the foot and goes around the back of the heel. From the arch strap coming down over the top of the foot is a wide ornamental band of leather; a toe strap passes through it and projects over the toes in a broad tongue with edges ornamented in repoussé work and cut straight – not fringed like the *nador* of the Hadendawa.

The dress of the Rashaida women

Of all the regional costumes in the Sudan, the dress of the Rashaida women is one of the most picturesque and elaborate. The Rashaida are considered by their neighbours to be secretly very wealthy. This may be because as camel traders they buy and sell other people's camels, while

The Rashaida female dress called tob is made by special Rashaida tailors or by the women themselves, of black material with red patches around the hem and long panels of red and black strips flowing from the sleeves. These and the damouriya and black skirts of the little girls are dyed in a deep red vegetable dye made from the pounded and boiled bark of the talh (Acacia nilotica) tree or the bishan tree, and the new garments are soaked in them for two days. This process reddens all the white tissues and browns all the blacks, reducing all the tonal contrasts to a much narrower and subtler range of russet browns. Much wear and tear in very dusty and waterless conditions give these clothes an additional dull earthy patina.

There is a curious resemblance in form and the intention to disguise between this costume and that of Franciscan nuns in Europe, dating back to the 13th and 14th centuries. The connection between these and the Rashaida is extremely remote both in distance and time, but a relationship may be sought in the contemporary Palestinian costumes of the crusades. It was fashionable then for European noble ladies to tightly bunch their hair at the side, and to wear a wimple covering their ears and neck. The Virgin Mary was portrayed like this until the late Renaissance, and the style survived in the religious orders into the 20th century.

Rashaida woman in the 1970s in her three layers of outdoor garments and a girba, leather bag

retaining their own large herds of smaller brown camels intact. This of course is a stereotype and amongst the Rashaida, as with others, there are some more prosperous and some poorer than others. Their most impressive manifestation of material culture seems to be invested in the jewellery of their womenfolk. Passing by a Rashaida encampment, one catches glimpses of these women as they seem to float across the landscape in their long, trailing, flowing dresses, often holding one end of a long sleeve panel over their heads to shade them from the sun. Spotted in town, gathered near a friendly Rashaida shop or by the gates of a hospital, they seem at first glance like anonymous reddish brown heaps, but on getting closer one becomes aware of the intricate decoration of their veils and headdress and the vast quantity of silver necklaces, bracelets and rings they wear.

From early childhood, a Rashaida girl gradually acquires more and more elaborate dress and jewellery. Around the Rashaida camps little girls can be seen helping their older sisters attend to the sheep and goats. Girls under 7 wear long skirts and a few bead necklaces and bracelets they call *hadida* – formerly these were of silver, but they say that since incidences of stealing from little girls have become regrettably more common, these are now of plastic or beads. The long skirt is called *tikka* in Arabic, but the Rashaida pronounce it *ticha*. Formerly, it was made of black and white stripes but some now wear plain *damouriya* skirts with ornamental black, square patches around the hem. These simple skirts are gathered around the waist by a string. Some little girls now wear a very simple dress of plain or coloured material such as can be seen hanging up for sale in any market. Rashaida girls under 10 years wear no headgear and often have their heads shaven except for a little fringe on the forehead.

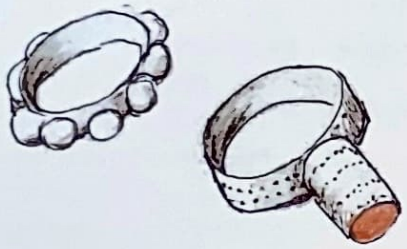
Between the ages of 7 and 13 a Rashaida girl begins to wear a face veil and headdress. This stage marks a profound effect in the nubile girl's mental and social development. As soon as a Rashaida girl begins to wear a veil, her mouth disappears from public view forever. The hiding of the mouth becomes a very important taboo and is strictly observed. During one of my visits at a camp, one little girl aged 10 was being examined by a medical student, and was very uneasy at his attempts to examine her tonsils under the veil, which she had only taken to wearing six months previously. This girl was wearing a long, gathered skirt which hung low on her hips. It was made by a local tailor from *damouriya* and had a row of black patches machine-stitched around the hem. The whole thing had been dyed red by her mother. Her veil, called *gargosh*, was made of black *shash* decorated by her mother with tiny silver beads in a

band which framed her forehead, and had a few touches of bead decoration at the corners to weigh it down. It covered her neck and shoulders at the back. Her face veil, called a *mungab*, was made of black material decorated with lead and silver beads called *rusas*[3]. It was worn just above the tip of the nose and usually fastened behind the back of the head usually with a leather thong in a way that cannot be seen under the head veil. Such face veils would be decorated sometimes with leather tassels hung down at each side of the veil to disguise the ears. This face veil gave the appearance of being fairly rigid and was outlined in pearly buttons and bands of *tilul*[4]. The centre of this face mask was weighed down by a vertical row of coins – some real and some imitation – called *damua*, which means tears.

The next age group of the Rashaida girls that has a distinctive dress is that of the girls preparing for marriage between the ages of 12 and 17. A girl will continue to wear the ankle-length skirt and *gargosh* until her breasts have developed. Then she begins to wear a full-length dress with long sleeves, the *tob*. Her head veil becomes much heavier, more voluminous and longer, with a fold in the centre that is brought well forward over her forehead. The sides of the veil hang forward in front of the shoulders and the two sides of this veil are held by an ornamental brace just below knee-length. This veil is called *hijab gargosh*. It is made of three squares of folded cloth heavily embroidered in geometric patterns with silvery lead beads interspersed with green and red beads and knots of wool. Hanging down from these panels are elaborately plaited and knotted tassels of red or green wool also threaded with silvery beads. The face mask of these maidens now becomes a much more elaborate affair called *mungab butaihi*. It consists of a large panel of stiff black cloth which is worn all the time. It is a remarkable object of folk art and always richly decorated with pearl buttons, *rusas*, silver plaiting called *tilul*, and additional real or stimulated silver coins. For maybe two years, a young adolescent girl will wear this *mungab butaihi* and then, if she is still not married, a large perpendicular fold is made in the *mungab* which projects forward about an inch and is decorated with coins and other discs or triangular silvery trinkets. This type of *mungab* is called *filaiti* and is worn for a further two years. By then the girl is almost a fully grown woman, and a forehead piece called *jabba* is added so that the mask now covers the entire face and neck leaving only a 'letter box' slit for the eyes. The border patterns of *tilul* are carried up around this forehead piece, and its central perpendicular fold is joined to the fold of the *mungab* by three or four rows of yellow or golden-coloured beads forming a little barrier that projects forward on the bridge of the nose. The effect of this mask and its restriction of the young woman's vision give

an incredible impression of downcast modesty for they cannot 'speak with eyes'[5], except to those right in front of them. At the same time, since all other visible expression is obliterated, it necessitates a great deal of eloquence and expression in those eyes which become such a focus of concentration.

Rashaida girls of this age group begin to increasingly acquire real jewellery – usually the gifts of their fathers or their brothers on their return from a camel selling expedition. One 17-year-old in the Al Rattaja locality was wearing seven rings on her fingers. Five of them were rather plain flat rings rather like signet rings, but two were the more prominent *khatim* rings typical of the Rashaida, made of a silver decorated cylinder about 3 millimetres in diameter projecting upwards from the shank of the ring and set with a stone – usually cornelian, but sometimes red glass or plastic bead. This girl also had on both wrists *ghuwaishat*, plastic bracelets of assorted colours and some in white metal imitation silver, called *hadida*. In addition to these higher up above the elbow she wore amulets called *maazid* – two heavy old ones of ivory, one on each arm, and others made of plastic beads and plastic wire.



The dress of a married Rashaida woman represents the complete culmination of all the elaboration possible in Rashaida female dress. The complete costume consists of five main items, the *tob*, the *bakrah*, the *marbatah*, the *ginaa*, the *milaya* made of black *shash* and decorated with *rusas*, and the *burgaa*. Whereas the first three items are worn all the time, the last two are worn on special occasions. The *tob* is the main item of dress – it is very much an all-purpose garment which has become an integral part of of the Raishaida women's dress and like many other ethnic costumes unconsciously implies gestures, mannerisms and a distinctive gait. The famous Arab poet Imru Al Qais, refers in a line of poetry to the beloved one's clothes as being 'between those of a child and a maid'. It is almost an individual tent, for inside its voluminous capacity, a Rashaida woman will carry out all her bodily functions, such as working, sleeping, dancing, playing, giving birth or defecating – she is always inside her *tob*.

Rashaida woman with indoor mask and jewellery

Head, lower face and neck are concealed at all times by the *ginaa* and the *marbatah*. Her hair is tied up with a leather thong in two large tight bundles called *jimrab* on either side of her cranium. Only a neatly arranged fringe called *hiffah* appears on the Rashaida women's forehead. Over the top of her head and tied around these bundles lies the heavily embroidered *marbatah*. This is a relatively small piece of cloth about 12 by 8 inches which, after some use, becomes heavily impregnated with oil[6]. It is almost entirely covered in silvery beads sewn in close geometric patterns. Its function is to anchor into position the voluminous *ginaa* or head veil which covers the Rashaida woman's head, neck and shoulders. This veil has a large hole in its centre whose edge, the *bakrah,* is heavily embroidered with silver beads and passed over the top of the head to rest securely on the back extremity of the *marbatah,* coming closely around the cheeks and under the chin. The *lithman,* a mouthcover, is formed by a fold of the material tightly brought up over the mouth across the tip of the nose. The lower edges of the *ginaa* hang well over the breasts and here, there are long silver embroidered *manajis* bands going down from the chin, that help to hold the veil heavily against the chest. This is how the Rashaida woman appears in and around her tent. However, when she moves a little further away, to where her goats are, or to work in the fields near her camp, she pulls the long, trailing piece of her left sleeve over her head for modesty and extra protection from the sun. When going on visits further afield, or into town, the Rashaida woman wears a folded red *milaya* of a silky red material imported from Egypt[7]. When folded, the part which is supposed to hang down the back is decorated with three vertical bands – 4 inches wide – of embroidery thickly decorated with heavy lead beads. At the bottom of this panel there is a deep ornamental border of netted silk threads and a tasselled fringe of red and grebe silk interspersed with silver beads. This is a garment used for important occasions, and is worn with conscious pride and carefully folded and put away, often in a cloth or leather bag, when not in use. Married women do not wear the *burgaa,* the face mask, all the time as is the case with the *mungab filaiti* for the unmarried girls. The married woman's permanent face veil is the *bakra* – the long, wimple-like veil which hangs over the *marbatah*. The ornamental *burgaa* of the married women is just like that described for the young girl called *mungab filaiti*. The important mark of difference between the *mungab filaiti* of the Rashaida maiden and the *burgaa* face mask of the married woman, is that married woman's is of red material[8] – the central panel however is often of white material on which some red or red and pink dye has been splashed in an ornamental way.

This burgaa is a very precious treasure – a mother will start making one for her daughter well in advance of the approaching wedding, as a great deal of work goes into it: precious coins and other decorative motifs such as the farashas must be collected and added to it. After her wedding, the bride will wear this mask on most visits and then as she matures it will be set aside and only brought out on certain festive occasions – weddings, circumcisions and at the Eids. It must never be worn during the time when a woman is menstruating or during the four months and ten days of idda, the waiting period necessitating that a woman remain in the confines of her home following a divorce or widowhood.

Until very recent times the Rashaida women had a special style of sandals of their own called *hirja*. These are still made in the Kassala market where the traders call them *zubeidi* – they are remarkable for the long tongue of leather which flaps down well over their toes. Anklets which they call *hijul* were fairly commonly worn by Rashaida women and girls and formed an attractive feature just peeping out from under their heavy dresses, but they hindered walking – perhaps intentionally – and became less common.

The significance of jewellery

In addition to this impressive costume with its elaborate embroidered decorations, every Rashaida woman has a remarkable collection of jewellery. Most is worn all the time and is a mobile display of the wealth and prowess of her husband. His ability to provide many of the items of jewellery as well as quantities of *rusas, tilul* and beads for ornamentation of the various items of his womenfolk's costume, not only indicates his wealth but also his resourcefulness in travelling to faraway places and in making a network of connections with others who have further trading connections in other directions.

One lady showed her treasures stored away in an old paint tin and proudly pointed out each item which her husband had brought her from Egypt, from Asmara, from Kassala and from Port Sudan[9]. During my interview with the *qadi* Ali Obeid at Al Rattaja, his wife was visited by her sister Fatima who was encamped about 4 miles away. By the warmth of her greetings one could tell that this was a rare and unexpected visit even though she brought along her spindle and black wool to pass the time. This lady was a typical example of an average well-to-do Rashaida woman on a 'best occasion' visit[10]. She was wearing a rather unusual variation of the Rashaida woman's *tob*. This dress was made with blue stripes in the sleeves – blue patches

around the hems – instead of the usual red. These ornamental patches around the hem were triangular and decoratively over-stitched in blue and red. When questioned about this unusual style, she proudly admitted that it was her best dress. The other ladies present confirmed that it was unusual for a Rashaida woman to own more than one dress. Most often one dress is worn for a whole year, from one Eid to the next, and sometimes longer, until it is really worn -out. Even then it is not thrown away, but may be cut-sown so that the good parts can make a skirt for a little girl and other substantial pieces are saved and incorporated with one of the patched-up screens used to separate the women's part of the tent from the men's.

This visitor owned a remarkable collection of jewellery. She wore a pair of *dimlij* above each elbow, silver armlets in the form of a coiled serpent. Between wrists and elbows, she wore a pair of *saaf* which consist of long cylindrical studded silver cuffs about 6 inches deep. Below this came another pair of bracelets of thick, studded silver called *mithad*, another pair came below with sizeable projections all around called *shimalat* – lowest of all over her wrist she had a pair of yellow plastic plain bracelets. On her fingers, she wore a quantity of rings, all of the typical 'stalked' variety which the Rashaida call *khatim*. But then she reached up under her veil and untied from a string slung around her neck an extra set of very special rings. Two of these were thumb rings, plain bands of silver about half an inch in width and banded by a row of low relief studs or knobs. In addition to these she produced a pair of the most extraordinary rings called *zigrah mishalshal*. Such a ring has projections on three points of the compass from each of which dangle four chains about 3 inches long, terminating in pear drop silver plaques. Fatima placed these both on the middle finger of each hand and demonstrated how they would tinkle and swing around as she moved her hands when performing their traditional dance. Around Fatima's neck and just below her *ginaa* she was wearing four different sets of necklaces one on top of the other forming a very impressive, but rather bulky, treasure trove. The simplest of these was on a red cord and consisted of a fairly plain rectangular silver plaque called *loh*. Wide red, blue and coral beads were threaded on the cord just above each end of this plaque. Next, came a silver crescent – attached by its own two horns to a black cord threaded with silver and yellow beads. From the lower curve of the crescent hung four little silver chains, about an inch long each. Worn a bit higher than these, and mostly hidden by the *ginaa* was the most precious of the necklaces: the centre piece consisted of a diamond-shaped *al heyachi* pendant studded with the elongated oval,

blue bead, and from its lower tip was suspended a Marie Therese thaler with four little chains hanging from its perimeter – this they called *al maghrabi*. The term *al maghrabi* meaning 'of the West' was applied to any large foreign silver coins used for decorative purposes by the Rashaida. The fourth and largest necklace, called the *hilal*, consisted of a very large and heavy silver crescent about 6 inches in diameter, decorated with a serpentine pattern of indented dots. It was threaded at the horns of the crescent onto a cord. Above each horn were threaded four large hollow silver balls with a cone-shaped one at the top. Suspended from the lower curve of this crescent hung twelve ornamental chains composed of tiny silver plaques of alternating diamond and circular shapes. It would be very hard to estimate the value of this lady's jewellery at the present high price of silver but certainly it was her pride and joy, and her sisters and nieces enjoyed her showing it and talking about it. Attempts to ascertain how much communal value this sort of jewllery held as in other Sudanese tribes brought firm denials, and it was affirmed over and again that a Rashaida woman's jewellery is her own personal property and cannot be taken away from her or converted into cash except of her own volition. A folk story gathered[11], illustrates how a whole clan on a desperate occasion can gather up the gold of their womenfolk.

Darees

It is said that, the tribe of Humran in eastern Sudan had a song called *darees* that they were very proud of and guarded jealously. Any stranger who was heard playing *darees* would be courting death. When such a stranger visited the tribe's camp and unwittingly started playing the exact tune, a woman of the tribe came to his tent and offered him a bundle as "supper for *darees*" to make him stop playing. The following day, the Sheikh of the tribe accepted that the stranger had played the tune in good faith, but nevertheless, he refused to take back the woman's bundle. It contained all the gold and silver ornaments of the Humran women, and since it had already been handed over in honour of *darees*, it would have been a disgrace to take it back.

Beja Apparel

The Halenga

The Halenga in Kassala consider themselves and are considered by their neighbours to be 'the original people of Kassala'[1]. Harold MacMichael classifies them within the Beja group of peoples[2]. In 1970 they seemed to be a settled people, their pastoral origins, however, were still evident in that nearly every Halenga household owned at least one cow and in almost every *hosh*, courtyard, several stout pegs were dug into the ground for attaching animals when they were brought home at night. Although many of the Halenga live in well-built but rather low-roofed mud houses, the women jokingly remarked to me about their *lagado* – made entirely of cane stalks, and which is a feature of every home – that "no Halenga woman is happy without such a kitchen".

A typical Halenga man

Maybe because they are now mostly settled, it is said of the Halenga that they dress "like the Hadendawa, only cleaner". From personal observation, the men seem to favour a short *gamis*, with waistcoat, and wide *sirwal* and the crossed-over *tob*, and they usually wear a *tagiya* alone or coupled with a turban. Men keep their hair cropped. Part of the settling process seems to include getting rid of the *tiffa*, the bushy hairstyle which earned other Hadendawa tribes the famous name 'Fuzzy-Wuzzy'. Indeed, the Halenga men's clothes are generally whiter than the other Beja and this reflects both the fact that they are often nearer to readily available water and to some extent to increased prosperity, due to the development of the Gash Delta, increased urbanisation, and industrialisation. Kassala over the last seven decades has provided an expanding market for their cows' fresh milk. The turban in preference to the *tiffa* is also a symbol of prosperity because both serve as insulation against the sun, but the *tiffa* costs nothing to purchase and very little to maintain – whereas the turban costs money and soap for its maintenance, just like the other 'whiter' clothes.

The *sideri* or waistcoat of the Halenga is usually blue, grey or black in colour and lined with

A man of the Halenga

white – and they vary in tailoring and sophistication. The most sophisticated *sideri* is sewn using the same coloured thread and is sometimes hand-finished. The so-called *afranji* style has two outer pockets on each side outside the tailored facings and often an inner pocket with a zip fastener. Halenga men wear imported or foreign style footwear. They carry slightly curved walking sticks, plain or occasionally decorated with woven leather at the handle, and do not – in town at any rate – carry swords or *safarok*, throwing sticks. Many Halenga men from Kassala keep horses or camels for visiting their often remote cultivated lands in the Gash Delta. They do not wear any special riding kit for this purpose, but the fact that they frequently ride might account for the fact that they have not taken to the 'all Sudanese' *jallabiyas* to the same extent that many of their young women have adopted the 'all Sudanese' *tobs* of the present day.

The Halenga womens' futa

Traditionally, Halenga women wear the *futa*, or *tifoda* as they call it in the Bedawiyet language, which is a very wide, 9 metres long *tob*, folded in half and sewn along one edge making it 4.5 metres by 2 metres wide. This is usually in some shade of red, green, purple or blue. It has a coloured border woven more closely to bear the extra wear and tear. This border is usually in yellow, gold and red. Amongst the younger generation these darker coloured *futas* are now being supplemented by lighter colours, such as pink, pale mauve, and pale green but woven in the same way with the same borders. Some new popular *futas* have shining gold lurex borders. The 'shot silk' effect of having the weft and wrap threads of two different colours is an old tradition, but considered by the Halenga as a step in the direction of 'fantasia'. Both the womenfolk and the merchants call such *futas, mallelauni*, whereas the traditional darker coloured ones with the silk borders are called *badawani*, and the lighter weight cheaper version with the cotton-non-shiny border are called *al zarifa*. All these coloured *futas* with woven borders are imported from India and so their price is subject to availability – therefore a substitute for these in times of shortage is the '*krib* (crepe) *suakini*', often dyed in the same colours as the popular *badawanis* by or on behalf of the importing merchants of Port Sudan. In addition to this there is a plain black muslin *futa* called *hallali huwadil* used for the kitchen and the *dukhan* smoke bath[3]. Halenga women deny the use of mourning attire. It was emphasised to me that only older and married women wear the *bengali futa* which comes

Young Beni Amer woman dressed for dancing

For the special wedding dances the hair hanging down at the sides and back is spread out at the ends and weighted down with lumps of perfumed mutton fat – this is called rashsha and is supposed to ornament the hair, as in dancing, the head swings in a forward movement and from side to side. In addition to emphasising this forward swinging of the head and giving the added effect of shading and mystery to the eyes, an ornament called the shabaka is attached to the murwad. This is a diamond-shaped piece of beaten gold and has a dozen or so pear-shaped pieces hanging on two links of chain along its lower, oblique angle.

in various qualities and is made of fairly cheap white cotton with a very minute longitudinal border, often black, green or brown. The two ladies I saw wearing these were coming to a *tahur*, a circumcision party, and each wore it over the head to form a *bullama*, face veil.

The *futa* is worn in the following manner: it is first securely wrapped around the hips – the amount of cloth used for this will depend on the woman's size. The width of the cloth fits an average woman from her hips to her heels. Shorter women roll over the surplus at the top. The rest of the material now passes diagonally from the right hip over the left shoulder – thus hiding the breasts, for which there is no other covering, then from the left shoulder up over the head and hanging loosely down on the right or brought tightly across the mouth from right to left, to form the *bullama* face mask, and then over the head from left to right leaving very little cloth to hang on the right. In the corner of this is sometimes tied some sacred sand from a saint's tomb or even Mecca or Medina, performing a double function. One function is mystical – that of protective blessing from which small samples may be handed out as a gesture of binding friendship between peers or from older women to younger women. The other function is the practical one of weighing down this important veil when needing both hands free for work or while travelling. Nowadays more modern young Halenga women wear smart cotton dresses and underwear under their *futas*. They cut a wide strip off the length of the *futa* – so that the central join is without bands – and they wrap it like the 'all Sudanese' *tob* from over the left shoulder and not around the hips.

The Halenga women have a traditional way of dressing their hair but it is rapidly giving way to more current 'all Sudanese' *moshat* braids, or loosened hairstyles called *tesrihas*. Young Halenga girls and ladies still, however, revert back to the traditional *sulli* style when invited to weddings as part of the bridegroom's dancing party. This *sulli* hairstyle consists of three main sections: many fine plaits from the temples straight down the sides of the head on both sides, then four layers in the middle section – the top layer being plaited in parallel minute plaits from the crown of the head forward to the centre of the forehead. Here they pass through a gold ring called *murwad* in Bedawiyet, where they are divided into two bands of four plaits each, brought in a sweeping curve well down over each temple, passed below each ear and fastened behind them. As the hair needs to be fairly long for this, it is sometimes supplemented with artificial hair woven into each little plait as soon as it begins to thin out at the ends. The *sulli* hairstyle with the *murwad* is worn commonly by many quite young Halenga women as well as by women from other Beja clans. For special wedding dances, the

hair is adorned in the *rashsha* style and gold ornaments are worn. Beaten gold imitation coin pieces attached to the plaits by black cotton thread are worn over the crown of the head. This is called the *sherifib* and is also worn by the bride, in whose case the pieces cover the whole head. In addition to this outfit, the dancers also wear more gold jewellery including the *dugga*, a gold and agate choker, and the *shafa*, a longer necklace of beaten gold imitation coins interspaced with cylindrical gold beads. One dancer wore a gold watch on her left arm – a *saa* with a handmade gold strap, a contemporary style *balabil* bracelet and 6 *ghuwaishat* (bracelets) on her right arm.

The Beni Amer

The tribe of the Beni Amer inhabit the hilly country which forms the frontier between the Sudan and Eritrea. They scarcely recognise this frontier and for ages have wandered backwards and forwards across it to graze their herds of camels and sheep on available pasture. However, at the time of the research the intensity of guerrilla warfare between Eritrean rebels and Ethiopian occupying troops have caused many of them to become almost permanent refugees in the Sudan, and the U.N. High Commission for Refugees has settled some of them on a new irrigation scheme at Qalaa al Nahl. This will no doubt affect changes in their style of dress as well as their lifestyle. However, Kassala has always been one of the Beni Amer's main marketing towns[4] – the other being Agordat in Eritrea. My informant for this section was a Jaali cloth merchant in Kassala who dealt almost exclusively with Beni Amer customers. On the day before the Eid Al Kabir, his shop provided me with the opportunity to interview many of the Beni Amer men who were buying clothes for themselves, their wives and children, and to learn from them many details about their clothing.

Beni Amer men's dress

The Beni Amer men wear a short-sleeved *gamis* coming down to mid-thigh length. It is usually made of *damouriya* and has a small mandarin collar and open front slit with no fastenings. This style is described as *baladi fatih* (local and open). Usually the cloth is bought from the shop and then sewn by the tailor on the veranda of the same shop while the customer waits. The same process is true of the *sirwal*, the long baggy trousers worn by the Beni Amer in

An 8-year-old Beni Amer boy wearing a sideri suakini with curved-shaped pockets. He has made his own walking stick.

common with other tribes of eastern Sudan. These are called *sirwal boja*. Those worn by the Beni Amer are made of 2 metres of *damouriya* for everyday wear, but for extra bagginess, 3.5 metres may be used. This extra quantity of material causes the extra bagginess to hang down in folds between the legs and was described by them as *dawa nazil*. The reason for wanting to wear them extra full was given as the desire for *fanjara*[5].

Another feature of Beni Amer dress also common amongst the Beja tribes is the *sideri*. This is the most expensive and most elaborately tailored garment worn by Beni Amer men and is usually of a dark closely woven material, lined with *dabalan* or *damouriya* and is a

protection for the chest against the wind. Its outer pockets form a useful place for small items, while money is kept in the inner pockets. The Beni Amer favour two styles of *sideri*. The style called in Arabic *sideri suakini*, and in the Bedawiyet language *suakined*, has one crescent-shaped pocket on each side. The other style with two straight pockets on each side is called *sideri afranji* in Arabic and *masdarad afranjied* in Bedawiyet. The *tob* – 4 metres in length of *damouriya* for everyday use – is worn crossed over all these garments, but for weddings the Beni Amer man must have his *tob* of *dabalan*. This seamless garment serves him for a variety of useful purposes – chiefly for covering him up when asleep and on dusty journeys by lorry or camel. Passing below the buttocks and then crossed over at the front, the ends hang over the back down on the ground emphasising the long strides these pastoral people make. When climbing the hills, these trailing *tobs* are often wrapped around their waists so as to not impede movement.

The shoes which the Beni Amer wear are called *niyelat* in Arabic and *issin* in Bedawiyet. They are very tough and strong. The soles and sometimes the entire shoe is made of old rubber tyres – this type has been nick-named *tamut takhali*, which translates as 'you die and you leave them behind'. The pride and joy of the Beni Amer male, and perhaps the most expensive item he wears, is his belt. This is called in Arabic the *kummar*, or *kummar khanjar* if he carries a dagger in it, and *sotal* in Bedawiyet. Decorated with repoussé work and sometimes with other pieces of leather of assorted colours, with two or three pockets sewn into it, it is worn with great pride. It protects the wearer from the rubbing of the camel saddle pommel against his back. Kassala market is full of leather smiths specialised in such work.

Beni Amer women's dress

According to my merchant informant, Beni Amer brides seem to be particularly exigent about certain items of dress and it is considered absolutely essential for the bridegroom to bring his bride the main item of dress. This is 6 metres of *surrati*, a white silky material with a purple border imported from India. However, at the time of writing, white *surrati* was not available, and was substituted by silky, white synthetic rayon woven in a pattern called *dag al musmar*, meaning 'hitting the nail'. The next essential garment for the bride was *gurgab* – a hip wrapper made of 2 metres of striped silk, called in the trade *abd al ghani*. The most sought-after variety is said to come from Beirut or Damascus and is of closely woven damask

silk in stripes of yellow, red, orange and black, with tiny patterned bands of white interspersed. There is a cheaper version of the same thing from India but it is noticeably poorer and thinner in quality, its colours are not so brilliant and may not come in the same exact combination as the classical *abd al ghani*. Under the *surrati tob* the Beni Amer bride also has a blue silk veil with a white, dotted pattern. This is called *hirid* in Bedawiyet and *tarha* in Arabic. It is considered an essential item of the bridegroom's presents. During the Beni Amer woman's life cycle, the culminating point at which her dress reaches its most expensive and elaborate stage is at the time of marriage. However, unlike the brides of the riverain Sudan, the Beni Amer bride is not a focus of display, but on the contrary, she is hidden. She is passed from hand to hand by her father, uncles and brothers from her own home to that prepared for her by the bridegroom, where she is placed in an inner tent within a tent curtained by rush matting and blankets. Before marriage, Beni Amer girls go in for quite a bit of ornamentation within the economic limits of their very austere pastoral way of life. Unmarried girls do not cover their heads and have a very special way of dressing their hair when they dance at the wedding party of the bridegroom. This style is known in Arabic as *rashsha* and the ends of their tresses are made heavy with *wadaq*, mutton fat. In their hair, they wear ornamental beads and silver pendants called *warag mushat* which tinkle as they wave their heads around from shoulder to shoulder in the dance movement. Two Beni Amer brides and one very young mother were interviewed at villages increasingly distant from Kassala and each increase in distance was marked by a lesser and lesser degree of *hadara*, influence of modernity.

Brides at Hariya

At a village on the frontier post with Eritrea, a bride was seated on an *angareb*, a wooden bed strung with rope, in a new *tukul*, a round hut. There was a curtain strung across the inner walls to hide her. The walls were hung with embroidered pictures, some with Arabic writing and others with Amharic mottos. New brightly coloured rush mats were ready to be fixed to the inside rafters in the roof. This bride was introduced to us by the village *murshida*, an adult education guide, who pointed out to us that this was a new style of bride under some amount of city influences. The bride was completely hidden in a *firka*, her colourful bridal veil, and only extended a hand and revealed one eye to greet us. She was wearing the following: a *firka* made of purple, red and white silky material which completely enveloped her, a *fustan* dress of figured white nylon, *libas* (modern knickers) with no other underwear

and no waist wrapper, and a *hirid* or *tarha* head veil in printed white Indian muslin called by them *maglamat*. Her hair was dressed in the style called *soked*, traditional for brides in eastern Sudan – with two pairs of four tresses each crossing over the forehead through a gold ring called *murwad* and then looped low over each temple. On the crown of her head this bride wore another ornament called *gured* – it consists of a small circlet of agate and red beads with large cylindrical silver beads flanked by silver balls at the front and back. Around her neck she was wearing a choker called *burganat* – made of three main square gold beads strung on three parallel threads, interspersed with small gold octagonal beads and agates, and with three gold conical beads at each extremity. Another modern feature of this bride, and also an indication of relative prosperity, was that she also wore six gold bracelets.

Another bride of six days at Silkiyai village, was in a round *tukul*, inside which was a further tent constructed with rush mats called *bet al birish*. A platform of palm branches about half a metre high occupied half the tent – this is the bridal bed and the place where she must stay for a whole year. In addition to the sleeping place, most of the family's precious possessions were stored here in iron trunks and leather bags. From a beam of the ceiling were suspended a number of pot hangers elaborately decorated with leather tassels; some of these contained vessels holding the bride's perfumes and ointments. The whole had a framework facing to the hut door constructed like miniature theatre pro-scena with narrow stripes of rush matting at each side vertically and horizontally across and behind the horizontal proscenium. A rolled blanket could be let down by pulling a string – thus concealing both bed and bride.

This bride was completely enveloped in a yellow *tob* called *krib*. When I asked her to show me what the bridegroom had given her, she shyly opened a trunk and produced one *hirid* or *tarha* (head veil) of crude Indian resist dye, red silk, yellow spotted patterns and dark blue borders. She called it *hirid mirgiyai* and said it came from Eritrea. She also showed me a *gurgab* – a full-length waist wrapper of striped silk, black, yellow and red – the cloth is called *abd al ghani* and is an essential bridal item. She had also been given a new pair of imported *shib-shib*, thongs. This bride had very little jewellery – a plastic bracelet on each arm, three ropes of *suk-suk* on each elbow. She also wore two old gold rings of which one had a stone missing. From her little finger dangled a very pretty handmade ring of *suk-suk* with six little *suk-suk* tassels hanging down. In her nose, she wore a thick gold *zumam*, nose ring, called by her *nazaled*. Forty days after her marriage she would be allowed to wear the larger nose ring which is passed through the right nostril almost in the centre of the nose, so that it projects

forward and has a useful function of facilitating breathing when her veil is drawn across her face. All the Beni Amer women are supposed to veil in public after marriage.

Young mother

A young mother from Obillat village was also sitting in her *bet al birish*, which was itself inside a full-size tent of *birish*, in which two goats and a calf were penned in one corner. This *bet al birish* did not have its side and top pieces of *birish*, but there was a tent arrangement over her head made mostly of old *tobs*, including one old *surrati tob* and an old piece of *sheyt arab*[6]. She was wearing a *futa* made of cheap, red Indian material with dark red borders as in a *farda*, called by her *shoged*. It was rather faded and stained brownish by the dust. She wore her *hirid*, or *tarha*, made of dark red muslin or *krib* tightly wrapped around her face like a wimple. She also wore an ankle-length waist wrapper made of striped cotton material – resembling *abd al ghani*. She was wearing no dress or petticoat but her *futa* was wrapped in such a way that she could conceal her breasts even when she was suckling her child underneath it. Around her neck she wore two strings of beads. On each arm at elbow-length she had four finely made ropes of *suk-suk* – made by herself – and on each wrist seven plastic bracelets. On each ankle she wore a string of mixed imitation agate discs and red beads. In her nose, she wore a plain gold *zumam* which she called *fay*. On her head she wore a *gured*, a circlet of agates and red beads, and two larger silver, trapezium-shaped pieces which could be seen sticking out under her veil. The semi-nomadic way of life and their economic state do not permit the Beni Amer many possessions, and most Beni Amer women own only one piece of every essential garment, replaced only when it is worn-out or at one of the two main annual religious festivals. These women do not have any special clothing for mourning. As a woman gets older and her own daughters get married, she gives up her jewellery to the new bride and re-threads her *suk-suk* and other beads for her daughters and granddaughters.

Grandmother

One 65-year-old grandmother wore her *hirid* or *tarha* of yellow *krib*, crepe, wrapped tightly around her head of grey hair and revealing only the face. Her *manakid* or *gurgab* – ankle-length hip wrapper – was of striped blue and white cotton and the *futa* was of double width, red with purple borders, double folded and wrapped tightly around the waist which then opened out wide and was brought up from the back over the left shoulder across the breast and

Beni Amer girl in 1974

over the head. She would fold that end across the mouth when going out in public. Around her neck she wore on her bare chest a double row of *sibhas*, prayer beads like a rosary, made of black wooden and red glass beads and a leather *hijab* amulet on a leather thong. In her left nostril, she wore a thick hollow gold nose ring called *nazaled*, and the plain gold nose ring known as *fay* in her right nostril. She also wore heavy silver anklets, called *hijul*. These have been almost entirely abandoned by the younger women.

Fay, a hooped nose ring

Girls

From around the age of 8 years until they are married at about 12 to 14 years, the Beni Amer girls begin to wear more clothes and dress their hair as described. The first garment to be added to the dress is a simple waist wrapper of one width of material – in some remoter parts this is still worn without a cotton dress underneath and only strings of beads around their neck. This first wrapper would be 2 metres long. Sooner or later as the girls become nubile, 4 metres are used instead of 2, and are wrapped around the waist and fastened at the right hip. The remainder of the cloth is brought up at the back and over the left shoulder where it may hang down loosely. It may be tucked in again at the waist when the girl is riding a donkey to fetch water so that it does not flap in the wind. The preferred material for this is called Kassala *sheyt arab* and is of a very distinctive kind of printed cotton with a red background and mostly circular motifs printed in black, white and green with a border pattern of the same colours, and a wide black border. These bright garments look very distinctive when groups of these girls are seen at a distance in the late afternoon, fetching water from the shallow wells in the dried-up stream beds, or gathering firewood. Girls of this age sometimes wear an ornamental tassel called *deberid* on festive occasions. It is made of a simple thong of leather around the neck knotted together at the back to just below the waist, where it terminates in an elaborate tassel made of beads and leather fringes. It is meant to swing far out when the girls are dancing.

The Hadendawa

The name Hadendawa has over the last century come to designate a dominant group of some of the Beja tribes living in the Red Sea Hills and the area of the Gash Delta. They have absorbed, through conquest and intermarriage and clientship relations, many other smaller groups whose names and identities have become submerged. Their encounters with the British army during the Osman Digna resistance circa 1884–85 earned them the nickname 'Fuzzy-Wuzzies'[7]. This name derives from their most remarkable hairstyles, and any record of the Hadendawa men's dress and general appearance must take this into account as it is their most distinguishing mark. Their presence in large numbers as migrant labourers in the docks and as milk sellers in and around Port Sudan and the now decaying port of Suakin, meant that many travellers through the Red Sea only saw that much of the Sudan, and so the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan sometimes came to be known as the land of the 'Fuzzy-Wuzzies'.

They are a very fine-looking people, taller and hardier looking than the Beni Amer. They are conscious of their looks and very proud of themselves. They tend to be haughty and hostile towards all strangers who are often both feared and despised by them. Their folklore in poetry and in song proclaims their spirit of defiance and endurance, but also their unpredictability.

They are in fact, like all the Beja, amongst the oldest tribes in eastern Sudan[8]. They have continued to live their isolated nomadic existence along the Red Sea coastal plain, in the austere and narrow pastures of the Red Sea Hills and between the Gash Delta and the Atbara River for centuries. They only rarely encountered smaller and larger groups of Arabs from the Hijaz and from Egypt fleeing from famine and the political pressures due to the fall of the Fatimids in Egypt and the Abbasids in Iraq. These migrant groups of Arabs have periodically penetrated the Beja territory and then passed further westwards to the Nile and beyond[9]. A more recent instance of this process is that of the Rashaida who were badly routed by the Hadendawa at the Massacre of Mettateb as recently as 1942. The government has since ordered the Rashaida to keep to the west of the Atbara River.

This movement of successive Arab groups from east to west has left almost no cultural imprints on the Beja. The Hadendawa have adopted neither the Arabic language nor the turban, though these have been carried much further west to northern Nigeria[10] and Mauritania. The Hadendawa have been converted to Islam, and it is likely that such holy men and *sharifs* from Mecca amongst them were the subject of Ibn Batuta's statement[11] that the Beja wore yellow turbans.

When drawing water from wells

Bibob style

Labebt style

Styles of girding up the tob

Before the expeditions of the Khedivial armies introduced items of Turkish costume into the Sudan, such as the *sideri* waistcoat and the long baggy *sirwal*, trousers, the Hadendawa dress was a fairly skimpy loincloth called by them *sirwal amatib* and worn in such a way as to secure maximum modesty. Since manufactured cloth became more easily available, a more voluminous loincloth 4 metres in length is still worn sometimes over a pair of *sirwal* and sometimes without. There is more than one style of wearing this loincloth.

For drawing water from wells and pouring it into a trough for their animals and for occasional rain cultivation, the shoulder piece is removed and makes an extra fold encircling the waist, leaving two ends hanging down like two tails at the back. The *bibob* style is worn when they are showing off their *bibob*, high jumps into the air, at weddings and other such jubilant

occasions called *doneb*. At wedding dances, brave young men step forward and volunteer to be whipped unflinchingly by the bridegroom. For this they wrap their cloth two or three times around the waist, thus protecting their vital organs, then they lean back with both hands and buttocks supported on a stout, curved stick stuck firmly into the ground. The gallant thus stands with bared torso, ready to receive the whip on his shoulders.

In the style called the *labebt*, loose, baggy folds loop down over the thighs and then one end is pulled through under the groin and wound once around the waist. The other end is passed up over the right shoulder and tucked in at the waist at the back. This style is very similar to the *ihram* style worn by all male Muslim pilgrims during the Hajj.

The Hadendawa bridegroom

On the occasion of his marriage, the Hadendawa bridegroom himself is dressed in typical tribal male costume but without a flowing *tob*. He wears long, baggy trousers called *sirwalok* or *sirdabob* made of 4.5 metres of *dabalan* or *damouriya*, gathered at the waist on to a drawstring of white cloth called *hijik*, and the embroidered and tasselled ends called *tidika* hang well down below the knee. These *tidika* are charming little examples of folk art, and the embroidery motifs are often similar in shape to the motif used by the Hadendawa in their carved combs. Many colours are used but black is predominant. These *tidika* hang in the front well below the knees and provide moving patches of bright colour now appearing and now disappearing as the wearer strides along. As they are made by women, the wearer has a subtle way of showing that he has received a gift from a member of the opposite sex. Above the *sirwalok* the bridegroom wears a *sideri*, a sleeveless jacket, but without a belt on this occasion. Around his neck he wears a leather thong with one or more leather-bound amulets and a large silver bead flanked by one or two large glass beads.

Most curious of all, the bridegroom's ritual outfit is the hiding or covering of his famous fuzzy-wuzzy hair. Traditionally, the bridegroom wears a sort of red veil called *muklal*. First, this is tied under his chin and then tucked or tied around the top of his thick mop of hair called *kubeb* and then it falls down his back to below the waist. Enquiry failed to provide an explanation of this rather strange and somewhat feminine style but there is a line of a Hadendawa wedding song which goes: "Oh sweet one the bridegroom, the bride is like a sister to you"[12].

A curious superstition pertains to this klet on the bridegroom's sandals. It is said that if a bridegroom on entering to his bride for the first time should happen to break the klet on one of his sandals then he will immediately turn back and walk out and then send a divorce to this woman as this is considered a very bad omen.

However, when the bridegroom first appears at the wedding dance, he carries two symbols of his full manhood status. Over his shoulder on a leather strap which is decorated with silver pieces, including one of a very curious shape called *dirgateb*, hangs a fine sword. This sword is of the straight two-edged 'crusader type common throughout northern Sudan. The hilt is often made of ebony decorated with ivory and silver and sheathed in a fine scabbard called *ambaded* of repousséd leather tanned either bright orange or a beautiful rich dark red. In his right hand, he carries a whip, the *kurbaj*, which is symbolic of his ability to drive his own camel herd. This whip will have an especially ornamental handle grip made of plaited pieces of thin, coloured leather. With this whip, the bridegroom will meet the young men who challenge him in the dancing ring and inflict one or two sharp flicks over the challengers' shoulders. On his right wrist, he wears a large silver bracelet.

The bridegroom's outfit is completed by a fine pair of sandals called *nador kidat*. The particular elegance of these Hadendawa sandals was noted by Burckhardt[13]. These are characterised by a long upper flap which fans out into a pierced and serrated edge called *madha* projecting well forward over the toes, and down again between the third and fourth toes – this is called *klet*.

The Hadendawa gallant liberally greases his fuzzy-wuzzy hair with wadaq (mutton fat) for a stiffened shiny effect. This well-rounded, fluffed-out tousled mop is called tiffa in Arabic and has a protective function, as the massed curls with all the trapped air spaces on top of the head provide a useful insulation against the sun. Some men have the longer neck hair arranged in eight yawadab plaits hanging straight down. Some call the tiffa 'the Beja turban'.

The Hadendawa are fond of carrying weapons, and they often need to because of leopards in the area. Up to a decade preceding this study, groups of men with their swords, short-handled spears and stout round dirra shields of stiff pressed cowhide were common at long-distance bus stops. All males carry strong klai sticks curved slightly at one end to lean on when watching their flocks. In the characteristic pose, the stick is placed along the back of their shoulders and both hands are crooked up over its ends. They also often carry the safarok throwing stick.

The long tob which the Hadendawa man wears on doneb occasions and journeys is also his portable 'sleeping bag' in which he wraps himself at night from head to foot stretching it tightly against mosquitoes and dust storms. The trailing ends of the tob are an impressive feature of the Hadendawa man as he strides along leading his camel, or when they flap behind him in the wind as he rhythmically bobs up and down in the saddle of his riding camel.

A Hadendawa man parading itafunjar style

The dress of the Hadendawa men

When setting out for long journeys or attending *doneb* occasions, or visiting town, some Hadendawa men are really remarkable sights to behold. There are some real dandies amongst them who parade with conscious swagger through the market places and open-air coffee-houses of Sinkat, Port Sudan, Tokar and Kassala. This dandyish showing off is called *itafunjar* and involves comparatively minor, but to them important, varieties of embellishments – such as extra amount of material in the *sirwal boja* or the long *tob* and specially decorated hair ornaments.

This *tob* is worn over all the other garments – crossed over in the front it is called *shi geidamti*. The long ends hang over each shoulder at the back – trailing almost to the ground – and are called *whashi itarafef*. The colour of this *tob* is originally white but very soon acquires a dusty khaki colour from its frequent use and seldom washing due to the waterless conditions in which the Hadendawa live. Under this *tob* older men may have just a completely bare torso, or simply a *gamis* (shirt) of the same dusty colour usually made of stout *damouriya;* but most often a *sideri* is worn, the long, sleeveless jacket much favoured by all the tribes of eastern Sudan. For this a strong cotton material is used – blue is a favourite colour but also black, brown and dark plain or stripy green may be used. They all have inner and outer pockets which are a very important feature of the garment. The lining is usually of *damouriya* and into this are sewn the inner pockets. Two of these are nowadays closed by means of a zip fastener. The shape of the outer pockets indicates two different styles of *sideri*. The so-called *suakini* style has curved, crescent-shaped pockets, one on each side at hip level. In the *faranji* style, there are additional breast pockets and these and the lower pockets are cut straight and have straight narrow flaps over the opening[14]. In realising the importance of these pockets to the wearer it must be appreciated that it is often his only 'safe deposit' and 'document case', for the Hadendawa do not tend to keep their money in their belts as the Rashaida do.

The Hadendawa usually wear a stiff wide belt of one single piece of leather which incorporates a loop for carrying their typically curved dagger or *shotal*. One end of this belt is round and has a buckle which is fastened by a thong attached to the other straight end of the belt. These belts are of very strong cowhide and are usually quite beautifully decorated with impressed motifs of wedge-shaped design – some are tanned dark red, some black but many are completely untanned and simply acquire a rich greasy patina as a result of being worn close to the body. Below this belt are worn the *sirwalok* or baggy trousers as mentioned

for the bridegroom. In recent times, the sandals commonly worn by many Hadendawa are less decorative than the traditional *nador kidat*. There is a simpler version called *nador dabolab* – this also has a long, projecting upper flap but it is quite plain. If the sole has only one thickness of leather it is called *galfitik*, but if the sole is made of old motor tyres it is called *keilan*. The Hadendawa despise the commonly sold sandals made of old rubber tyres and will never wear them. They prefer to economise by wearing the very simplest sandals, known as *shigayana*, worn by other tribes such as the Shukriya and the Hassaniya.

Every Hadendawa carves his own khulal and wears it with great pride. It is considered very shameful for this khulal to fall out especially at such a public occasion as a wedding dance or in a fight. There is a wedding praise song which goes: "He does not run away – his khulal does not fall".

The Fuzzy-Wuzzy hairstyle

The crowning feature of the stylish young Hadendawa man is his striking eponymous 'fuzzy-wuzzy' hairstyle. This is not as wild as it may seem, and in fact is carefully and lovingly fussed over as much as its Afro cut counterpart so fashionable in the seventies amongst the youth in the USA, Europe and University campuses of Africa[15]. Sometimes the top mop of hair is tied up with a leather thong for rigorous work or in the case of a dust storm, but the Hadendawa consider this as a state of undress and would not like to appear in this way in public. According to photographs and drawings in the 'Graphic' and the 'Illustrated London News' during 1884–85, at the time of the Suakin campaign, the Hadendawa had their *tirra* arranged in three separate sections – a smaller mop standing stiffly on the top and separate fluffed out sections at the side. There is a photo of Osman Digna with his hair like this dating back to 1898[16]. Even now east of the Gash Delta more hair is worn at the sides whereas west of the Gash it is all in one with

the top bunch. This big *tirra* is frequently fluffed out by means of a decorated wooden comb or prong called *khulal* in Arabic, which is stuck into the hair at a jaunty angle. These *khulal* are of three different kinds, the most common one being the pronged comb which is carved by them from the white wood of the *amab* tree. This is decorated with etched geometric designs scratched with a knife and then soot is rubbed into them. These combs are about 10 inches in length and may have from two to five prongs about 5 inches long, with the rest of the comb forming a curved ornamental handle projecting from the head. Another kind of *khulal* is made of a gold-yellow wood from the *indirab* or *sarayet* tree; it is made of one long curving arc of a singular prong and is curved in a neat finial. The other single pronged *khulal* is like it but with a straighter shaft usually made of black ebony wood and its finial decorated with a silver band or coiled copper wire for added elegance[17].

From boyhood to manhood

A group of standing Hadendawa boys in the age range roughly from 5 to 15 years provide a handy visual model of the way these boys gradually acquire full manhood status in dress and accoutrements. The youngest boy wears a simple short pair of pants and nothing else except maybe a leather-covered amulet on a leather thong around his neck. At this age, his head is fully shaven except for a little tuft on the top from which a little plaited *dafira* hangs down. An 8-year-old wears *sirwal* to the knee and a simple short-sleeved *gamis* to hip length. His hair is carefully cut short to about an inch all over and neatly shaven around the temples, back and sides. The 10-year-old begins to grow his hair a bit longer to a well-rounded shape and has a small two-pronged *khulal* which he has carved himself. One such boy encountered on the road to Wagar, carried his own toy wooden sword which he had carved himself and hung it in its home-sewn scabbard of *damouriya* – he was wearing a short *gamis* and a short *sirwal* with only a plain knotted *tijik*. At the age of puberty, the Hadendawa boy begins to help in herding and watering camels and goes out on his own, herding large flocks of sheep and goats and his dress shows his new status. He may now have a relatively short *sideri* and sometimes a short *tob* and his *sirwal* will be baggier but, though not full-length, worn just below the knees. By now he will have a good rounded mop of hair with a suitable sized *khulal* and will carry the stout walking stick known as *kolai*. At this age, because of the longer distances he is beginning to undertake in the stony hills, he wears simple sandals. From this age onwards, his ambition is to achieve the full outfit of the Hadendawa male which he must work hard to earn.

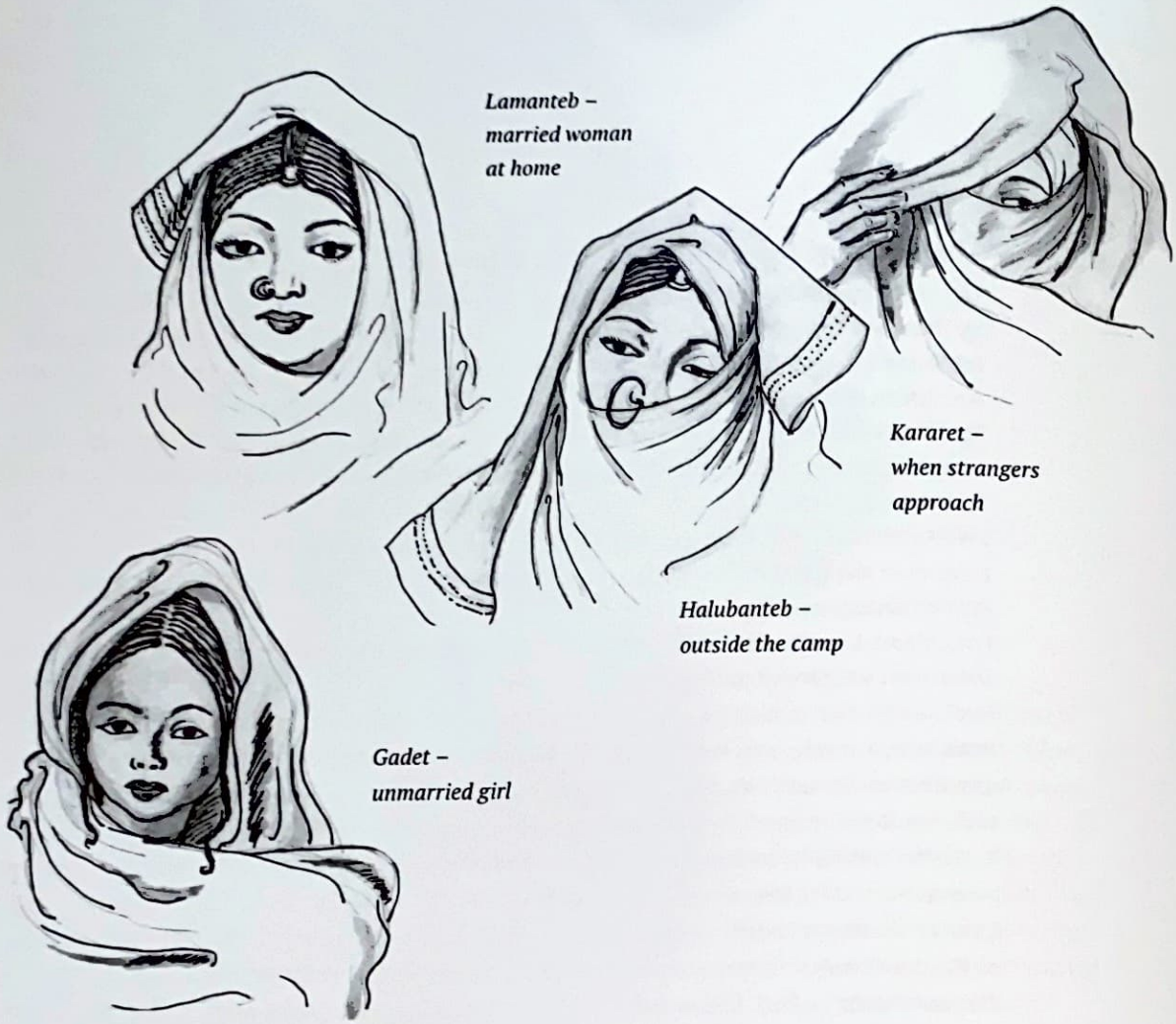
A woman of the Hadendawa carrying a leather bag and covering her face in the halubanteb, outdoor style

One of the most colourful costume scenes in the Sudan occurs along the Suakin-Tokar road when one of the Khatmiya leaders comes on an annual visit to hear complaints, settle quarrels and to impart baraka, blessings. Such a big gathering displays the full range of colours worn by women and one can observe certain favourite colours such as purple and crimson red. Around their encampments in the Red Sea Hills, groups of twos and threes can be spotted by the traveller from very far away, dotted about here and there in the bare landscape, by the sheer brilliance of the coloured tobs they wear.

The dress of the Hadendawa women

The Hadendawa women call their *tobs* by the name *futa*, wrapper, and their type is known by them and in the trade as *surrati*. *Tobs* are mostly imported from India and more recently some are being produced in China. The commonest colours are purple, red, royal blue and dark green and these are worn by women of all ages, whereas bright orange, yellow, pink and lighter greens are purchased only for brides and younger women. These *surrati tobs* have coloured borders both along their length and width, usually of a yellowy golden colour. More recently gold, metallic and lurex threads are woven into these borders. For a while, in the 1960s there was a fashion for weaving lurex metal threads into the warp of the *futa* giving an all over shiny effect called *sukar* (sugar) but these were very flashy in the sunlight and the fashion disappeared.

The silkiest *surrati tob* of the best quality has the warp threads in one colour and the weft threads in another colour giving a 'shot silk' effect. Those of the best quality are called *badawani*. The meaning of this word was explained to me by one bystander with a twinkle in his eye: it means 'you are keeping me awake all night'. Some recently appeared *tobs* have romantic names such as *hayama*, which means anxiety. The wearer is anxious in case the *tob* should fall off, as it is made of slippery material with creamy and gold stripes of tetron in it. *Ghira*, meaning jealousy, is of red shot with yellow and is favoured for weddings. *Kadadat* means short – it is only 6 metres compared with the 8 metres *badawani* and with fewer gold threads. *Todhash* means donkey and is a derogatory name used for the cheapest imitation of the *badawani*. When economic stringencies cause a scarcity in these *surrati* imports, the merchants of Port Sudan dye ordinary white voile *tobs* in the colours favoured by the Hadendawa and these are known in the trade as *krib* (crepe) or sometime *krib bort sudan*. They are always regarded as a poor substitute for the real *surrati*, and are often purchased only for the younger unmarried girls to wear around the home. Hadendawa women who have married into merchant *jallaba* families or into the families of the religious leaders in the area, such as the Majazeeb of Erkowit or the Wagaror, or the Khatmiya of Sinkat and Kassala, wear dresses and underwear under their *futas*. But for the majority of Hadendawa women the *futa* is the total cover up and the only garment worn. It is folded in the same way as that of the Halenga and the Beni Amer.



Hadendawa women's styles of face veiling

Hadendawa women are extremely shy and pull their *futas* across their faces, only peering out with one eye at the approach of strangers or in the presence of men who are taboo to them. There are four different stages of veiling the face with the *futa*. The most exposed style is called *gadet* and here the end of the *futa* is passed once over the head and then thrown over the right shoulder leaving the face and throat fully exposed. This style leaves the hands and arms free for work and is the most common style worn around the home and by young girls

tending goats. In the *lamanteb* style, the end of the *futa* is wrapped around the face in front of the ears, brought over the top of the head – but still the face is fully exposed. Next comes the semi-marking of the face called *halubanteb* in which the *futa* is wrapped tightly across the lower half of the face and only exposes the eyes. Both these last styles leave the hands free and are commonly worn when in a place exposed to the public gaze or wind and dust. The most modest style of all is the *kararet* and for this the right hand is used to pull a heavy fold of the *futa* over the right eye while the wearer shyly and discreetly peers out from the left.

Elements of the Hadendawa women's dress

Hadendawa women plait their long, black hair in the same style as that of the Halenga women. An additional ornamentation of two rows of gold coins is worn over the temples by women who have given birth to their first child. The bride has her whole head covered with gold coins and this headdress is called *mashushat*. For every day, they wear a simpler version of the *mashushat* made of one central gold ring with strands of gold beads and coral, one at each side and one at the back. Some Hadendawa women wear a small nose ring fastened by a little agate bead, which they call *soumit*. Many wear a much larger *zumam*, nose ring, which is either a thin, plain, hollow gold ring, or one in which the lower curve has been beaten out to form a large, deceptively heavy-looking crescent. The Hadendawa bride also wears a traditional necklace at her throat featuring a large, cylindrical gold bead called *mushkad*. Traditionally the bridegroom must present her with one *surrati futa* of the best quality and a pair of ornamental sandals called *shakelitat*. Dressed only in these two items and heavily perfumed and anointed with oil, the bride is carried to the bridegroom's tent and for the next six months she must be dragged there showing reluctance every night.

Few Hadendawa women are wealthy enough to wear gold bracelets, but some wear silver *kim*, an open, heavy, silver-studded bracelet. Many Hadendawa women still wear anklets – either the traditional penannular silver anklets, or strings of red beads, or anklets made of leather and tiny beads. Their traditional sandals are the same as the *nador kidat* of the men but lighter and with more ornamentation and bits of coloured plastic embellishments. A style of sandal called *hindi* has become common – originally from India – probably not by way of trade but brought by a few pilgrims returning from Hajj – and they are now quite popularly imitated by some Hadramauti shoemakers around Port Sudan.

A young Hadendawa girl carrying a little leather bag

Very young Hadendawa girls have their heads shaved in concentric circles leaving a few tresses to be plaited at the back, they then grow the back hair and keep the front hair short. When they are being prepared for marriage, all of the head is shaven and the whole is allowed to grow evenly to be plaited when it is long enough. Little Hadendawa girls wear very long, simple, brightly coloured dresses and anklets of silver or beads.

One form of handicraft practised by Hadendawa women is in fine woven and knotted leather-work such as that used in making fanciful leather pillows for the bridal couple. But more commonly seen is the intricate leather and beadwork that they sometimes lavish on their little girls. One I encountered watering goats with her father and little brother at the Sessareb crossing of the Atbara River, wore a large silver medallion called *abojalab* on top of her head. It was flanked at each side by two smaller silver coins, pierced and sewn to her closely plaited hair with black thread. Attached to the back of the *abojalab* was a row of red, white and green beads hanging down and ending in a little leather tassel. Around her throat she wore a tight string of yellow beads called *lamanab*, and just below this a tight neckband of tiny

Hadendawa girl of 9 years, wearing bead and leather ornaments

red, black and white beads sewn onto an inch wide leather band called *lodei*. Below this was another necklace made of a double row of tiny red *suk-suk*, beads, and threaded into this at the front was a small row of seven longer imitation coral beads. All over her chest and hanging down well below the waist over her simple long dress she was wearing an extraordinary set of leather braces, called a *tombas*, made of thin strips of plaited leather and tiny beads. A tubular leather cord around the neck hung well down onto the chest where it was joined by the brace of plaited leather; then the ends hang down but sprouted into tree leather tassels, the knots of which were covered in tiny beads of green, white and red. And these in turn had below them two more tassels of the same design. The girl's father confirmed that all this had been made for her by her mother. It is interesting to reflect on the creativity of the mother hidden away in the encampment, while her handiwork is lavished on the young child, who is still allowed to be seen around in the company of her father and brother.

Attire of the Riverain Sudan

Considerable homogeneity is found in both male and female costume all along the Nile Valley, from Batn al Hajer southwards and embracing the triangle formed by the confluence of the Blue and White Niles in a line roughly from Sennar to Kosti. Here, population is concentrated along the cultivated strips on the riverbanks and in the major agricultural schemes of Gezira, Geneid and Zeidab. There has always been a great deal of movement up and down the river. This comparatively confined strip, flanked on both sides by dangerous and thirsty deserts, has always been one of the historical routes of traders, explorers and conquerors in Africa.
Although various nomadic tribes living on the outskirts of the cultivable area have often proven a menacing scourge to the trade caravans, nevertheless the pastoral Arabs and the settled agrarian population of the riverside villages exist in a symbiotic relationship. These villages and market towns have been sources of clothing supply to both the local people and the transient Arabs coming from a very wide area. The cloth shops and tailors became foci for the consolidation of fashions and styles. Some places have been famous for the weaving of cotton, and a major trade product of this area was *damour*, the homespun and woven cotton which became not only an important trade item but also a form of currency[1].

Sources of new styles

New styles and items of fashion have historically spread from such trading centres as Berber and Shendi, and wherever else the caravans that set out from Darau in Egypt halted on their way to Sennar. Fashions and goods coming from India and Arabia spread from Suakin and Aydhab on the Red Sea. The Funj capital at Sennar with its own glamorous courts gathered in goods from these sources and was a centre of luxury and exaggerated costumes for a relatively short period. But since the Ottoman rule and the establishment of the nation's capital at Omdurman, the wholesale cloth market has centred there and since the turn of this century, with the emergence of an emancipated Sudanese elite in the capital, fashions have tended to emanate from Khartoum. Indeed, some of the names by which the female *tob* attire has been called over the last five decades illustrate the progressive Khartoum urbanisation, such as the 1930s *tob* varieties *janayin shambat* (gardens of Shambat) or *rimush awlad burri* (Burri boys' eyelashes), where both Shambat and Burri are suburbs of Khartoum.

Government coercion and influence

The Khedivial Governor of Sudan, Musa Pasha Hamdi (1862–65)[2], did in fact order that people should wear Turkish attire, but the effectiveness of his order is doubtful outside Khartoum, or even amongst other than a comparatively few public servants and some merchants in a few main towns. Much more effective and widespread was the influence of the Mahdist movement which was both a puritan reform and a consciously Sudanese nationalist and anti-foreign movement. The patched *jibba* costume of the Ansar dervishes was embraced widely by militant adherents of the Mahdist cause[3]. This simple costume consisted of a *jibba, sirwal* and turban and it became the first Sudanese national costume. The Mahdi also ordered women to wear the *tob* in the street and to be fully veiled.

The turn of the century following the British re-conquest of the Sudan and the setting up of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium saw Egyptian and European influences again creeping in. European cut suits, often made from white material, and red *tarbushes,* tassled caps, were worn by the Sudanese effendis in the capital in the 1920s and 1930s. Junior Sudanese Government officials working with the British wore khaki shirts, shorts and 'Bombay Bowlers', a type of pitch helmet. The British officials themselves mostly wore white or khaki shirts, shorts and socks during working hours right up until the time of the Sudan's independence in 1955. During the early days of independence, when a large diplomatic corps first appeared in Khartoum, the Sudanese top politicians and professionals tended to dress in full-collared European suits of dark hues, and ties. President Nyerere of Tanzania, seeking for an African compromise, set a fashion for collarless, round-necked light suits which became fashionable in the Sudan under the name of *congoli,* now called *sataan,* from satin. After the 1969 May revolution, men's costume saw a mild militarisation as light-weight, open-necked, short-sleeved suits in shades of khaki came into fashion.

Basic materials

The extent of homogeneity in costume in this riverain area may be due to three main similarities: that of climate, of occupation and of basic materials. The climate is so very hot as to make walking barefoot impossible and therefore some form of leather footwear has a long history in the Nile Valley. Very little wool is produced and it has never been an important material for individual clothing. There have been gold mines in northern Sudan since the time of the

pharaohs, and gold is highly regarded, although predominantly worn by women as the men avoid wearing it, in accordance with Islamic understandings. Silver is very little worn in this area. The predominant material is cotton and there is evidence that cotton has been cultivated and worn in this area for over 2000 years[4]. By the 13th century, the quality and quantity of the cotton material produced in this area was such that it became a form of currency both for internal and external trade.

Cotton

The weaving of cotton was a cottage industry in the farming communities and was practised during agriculturally slack periods. Ginning and spinning were mostly done by women, while men did most of the weaving, although women may have had to help to set up warp threads[5]. This craft still survives. In Omdurman there are groups of related Coptic families that originate from weavers and dyers from Naqada in Egypt still engaged in this craft, as did some other groups of Jaaliyin seasonal weavers from Jebelab. The other areas where this craft survived are Dongola and a whole string of villages west and north of Shendi, such as Nurab, Jebelab and Mekniya. In the Blue Nile area there are weavers in Rufaa and amongst the Halawin near Hasahisa. Traditionally the customers supplied the weaver with the thread to be spun by his own womenfolk. A fast weaver could finish a *tob* of 12 *duraa* (6 metres) in about two days. The following anecdote is told of one customer whose weaver took longer.

The customer whose weaver let him down

On the occasion of the Eid it is an important social custom for everyone to wear new clothes symbolic of freshness and renewal following the fast of Ramadan. The social pressures are so great that anyone failing to appear in a new garment will be despised as mean and incompetent. On one Eid day, an angry man appeared at the large open-air prayer gathering, carrying bundles of warp and the weft of threads on his shoulders. "As you can see, I was all prepared but my weaver friend let me down so I have brought the threads to demonstrate my good intention", he proclaimed.

Limitations of the hand loom

This local handwoven cotton material for men's wear is called *damour;* it is woven on a loom whose width is a single *duraa* (the width of a man's forearm and palm). This is just comfortable for the weaver to work on without having to stretch his arms unnaturally. The weaver sits with his feet in a pit. This enables him to work the treadles which create the sheds, while his hand sends the *markub*, the shuttle, from side to side. It will be shown later how the limitations of the width of this material became a factor in stabilising many basic features of costume in this area. The setting up of the Gezira Cotton Scheme and the rigid controls on the sale of raw cotton almost totally killed the cottage industry of homespun and woven cotton. This is explained and deplored in detail by G. M. Crowfoot[6], who at the same time extols the virtuosity of the *tob damour*. "*Damour* too is a strangely warm material and is therefore admirably suitable for winter wear. A Sudanese winter is really winter to the Sudanese and they need warm wraps – wool is too warm and a very costly import".

In fact, it is women customers who have kept the hand-weaving industry going. The weavers' finest product, *fardat al banat,* has always remained in demand, particularly by older women, for its durability and simplicity. It is plain white with a single coloured or black border at each end. The *farda* came back into fashion when imports began to be restricted, as happened during the acute economic crisis in 1958, when coloured *fardas* were woven for the very first time. The first coloured *fardas* were produced by a small mechanised textile factory set up in Nurab. Nowadays imported mercerised thread is invariably used for the warp and either homespun cotton or mercerised for the weft.

Imported cotton goods

Judging by some of the Faras murals, cotton and linen goods were imported into Nubia, probably in small amounts, from Egypt for use by priests and noblemen. From Funj records we know that imported cotton goods reached Sennar from Egypt via the Nile Valley and from India via Suakin and Ethiopia. Coloured and fancy goods were worn by chieftains and courtiers in the various parts of the Sudan, but for most people the prevalent colour has always been, and remains, white. *Dabalan* and poplin for men's dress are common but the most common and most durable material – called *merkiani* in other parts of Africa – is unbleached calico, supposedly getting its name from America. In the Sudan it is called *damouriya* – meaning 'a sort of *damour*'. Later it came to be manufactured in the Sudan, first in the Zande Scheme

and then in two major textile factories in Khartoum North. It is most popular with all the rural people but is not considered elegant enough for townsfolk who use it for mourning widows and as covers for mattresses. Next in popularity for men's wear comes *dabalan* (bleached calico) and then various light muslins – mostly from India – which are used for *arragis*. Better quality muslin is used for turbans. Various qualities of poplin have been the standard material for men's *jallabiyas*, which will be described later.

Leather

Because of the large numbers of animals in the hinterland of this area, leather has always been in plentiful supply. Some of it was used and made into products by the women of nomadic tribes, but quite a lot came to the market towns as dried hides. Curing and tanning was usually carried out on the outskirts of those towns which held regular cattle markets. Alum from the Red Sea Hills and *garad* pods from the *sunut* (Acacia nilotica) trees along the Nile were used for tanning. A bright yellow orange colour was the most popular followed by dark madder red. Men of the Nile Valley do not favour belts as do men of eastern Sudan, but keep their money in well-tooled leather pouches in their deep pockets. Only when going on pilgrimage would a man order a special belt with money compartments. Women have a very special kind of leather purse called *mufhada* made of several compartments with a very long, secure flap.
Most rural men, both agriculturists and pastoralists wear leather armbands on their left arm which hold a dagger-shaped all-purpose knife in a neat leather sheath. A number of amulets in neat cylindrical pouches of leather may be worn as protection against injury, disease, impotence and other dangers.

A sikeen, all-purpose knife worn on the arm

In all the market towns, leather is fashioned to a fine degree of craftsmanship into footwear as is testified at Shendi by Burckhardt[7]. Today in some of the weekly markets such as Bannaga, Al Damer and Suq Tamboul[8], it is still possible to see scenes such as described by Burckhardt. Under a very primitive shade formed of three sticks and a bit of sacking, shoemakers sit with their simple tools. It is possible for any customer arriving from a long distance to order a pair of shoes or sandals on arrival and collect them before going home. Leather is also used for long-handled shopping bags made of coarse goat's and camel's wool, called *khortay* or *mukhlaya*. Most rural men carry these on their shoulders when coming to the market.

A protective leather amulet worn around the neck

For hundreds of years and until very recent times, leather was used to make the *rahat*, which was worn by little girls all over the Sudan until the age of puberty. This finely-made garment was made by nomadic women as part of a domestic industry by which they could earn some money selling them to the riverain people. Some Arab (nomad) girls can sometimes be seen still wearing them when coming to fetch water from the river on canals, or at wells further inland in places such as Naqa[9]. The symbolic importance and diacritical nature of this virginal garment can be seen in its retention for the wedding ceremony of *gutt al rahat*, the cutting of the *rahat*, in which the bridegroom breaks off the leather thongs which tie the *rahat*, and scatters them amongst the young girls in the crowd – thus symbolically dispensing with his bride's virginity in more ways than one.

Another finely-crafted leather product made by Arab women is the *ragabiya* necklet. This is neatly woven from very thin leather strips and

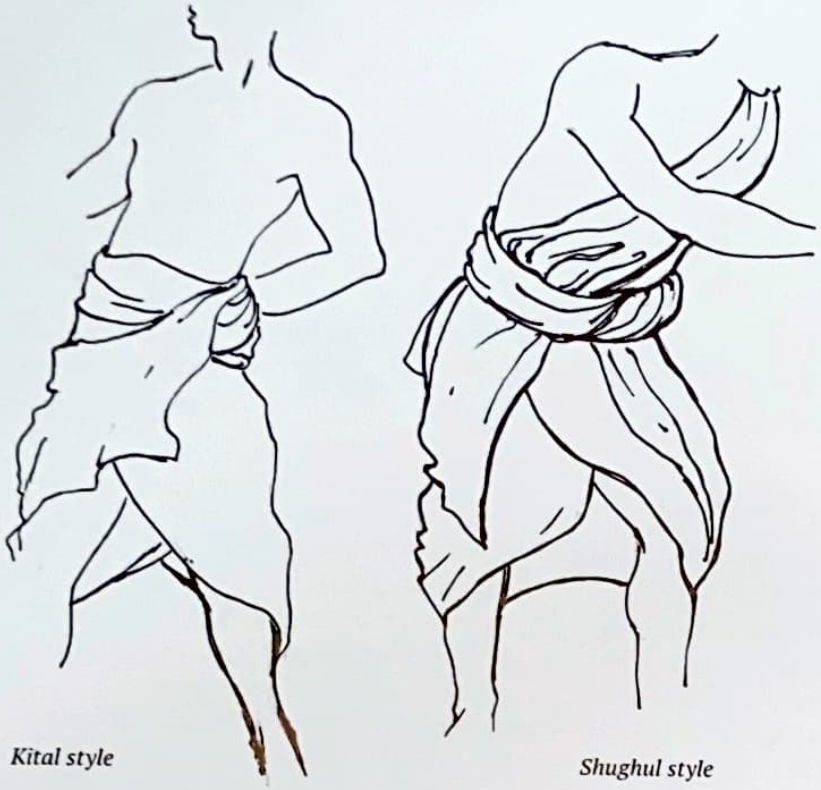
forms a small cylindrical pouch containing dried efficacious herbs. It is hung around the neck on plaited leather strings decorated with leather tassels which hang down the back. The *ragabiya* hangs around the neck and is still worn by very little girls in some country districts.

Men's costumes

The *tob* being a seamless garment probably has a very long history in the Sudan. Over the centuries different peoples developed various styles of draping and wrapping themselves in this basic garment. The Romans, for example, had as many as thirty two different styles of wrapping the *toga* immortalised for us in Roman sculptures and friezes; each style had its own name and its correct and elegant appearance. In other parts of Africa, the seamless garment for men has been some form of wrapper, sometimes wrapped over one shoulder, sometimes under their armpits and often just around the waist in work situations. A voluminous wrapper of beautifully woven Ashanti cloth became the official national dress of Ghana and was worn by President Nkrumah at the annual Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference in London for the first time in 1958. Traditionally, the Sudanese man's *tob* is made of two lengths of material 12 *duraa* in length, sewn together by hand, with the width of each length being determined by the width of the hand loom. Later, however, some men wore imported *tobs* woven in one piece on wider looms such as the *surrati*, a silk *tob* from India, and *al munayir* meaning 'double loom' from Egypt. This double width – 2 *duraa* – was in any case sufficient to cover a man's body from shoulder to calf and was often worn without any underpants as is still the case with the pilgrim's *izar*. Traditionally the Sudanese man's *tob* could be worn in four different styles[10].

The different styles of the Sudanese man's tob

The *kital* style, as its name implies, is the fighting style of wearing the *tob*. In this style, the wearer is really girded-up fast in such a way as to allow maximum freedom of movement and agility. To put it on, the man stands with his legs wide apart and wraps the *tob*, doubled in half along its length, around his hips – the rest of the length of the *tob* is then bunched-up and wrapped twice around the middle of the body thereby protecting the vital organs. Such a warrior would carry a sword in its scabbard in a strap over one shoulder and a dagger or knife strapped on the left arm together with protective amulets.



Kital style *Shughul style*

The *shughul* (work) style is still commonly worn in many rural areas of the Sudan for activities that need a fair amount of vigorous movement, such as drawing water from wells and pouring it into troughs for animals, for cutting down trees, cultivating land, and building. The *tob* is folded in half and wrapped as in the *kital* style, but the extra length is wrapped only once around the waist and the rest is thrown over the left shoulder and firmly tucked in at the back under the waist wrapping, with a small tail of it hanging down.

The *gadla* (striding) is the style most commonly seen all over the Sudan today, with some variations between eastern and western parts of the country. To put it on, it is first passed around the back below the buttocks and loosely held in both hands. First one end is tossed with the right hand across the left shoulder – then the other end is tossed by the left hand over the right shoulder. At the back, these two ends hang down freely. It is the elegant way with which these trailing ends swing at the back when the wearer is walking that gives this style its name *gadal*, to stride nobly. Some young men like to have these ends trailing almost to the ground and this style is called *fanjara*. When seated on the ground in discussion, groups of men dressed in this style may be observed frequently hitching up their *tobs* on their shoulders when emphasising their manliness[11]. This unconscious movement may be compared

Kirrib for riding *Gadla style*

to a bird flapping out its feathers to impress its adversary. The *dihin* style is only worn in the privacy of the home in condition of conjugal intimacy. As its name implies, it is worn at the time of massaging the body with oil or *dihin*, fat. This used to be done by female slaves and its administration as part of hospitality to strangers in Berber is described by Burckhardt[12]. It is a loose style similar to the *gadla*, but since it is worn without any other underwear – its whole width is unfolded to cover the body more easily. Until recently this style was commonly worn by the bridegroom as he waited for his bride on their first night together. Usually as an economy, an old, shorter length of *tob* is used since it is destined to become impregnated with grease and very difficult to keep clean. Sometimes because of its short length, the ends are tied behind the neck after crossing diagonally across the breast for more security. Some old *fekis* and some privileged tribal dignitaries keep this style as an affectation of simplicity and unpreparedness.

The sirwal

These pants have probably not been worn in this area for more than a century and a half, as most early travellers mention peasants along the river wearing loincloths. The antecedent

of the *sirwal* was the *garin*, a short loincloth often depicted in frescoes of pharaonic and Meroitic times particularly on peasants, servants and prisoners. However, the Pharaoh himself is often portrayed wearing such a short, topless garment, but of pleated material and overlaid with a rare animal skin and a beaded girdle. The *sirwal* is a simple form of pants, wide and loose, comfortable and cool. It is gathered at the waist by a cord threaded through a wide hem. This cord is called *tikka* and may be made of plaited wool or cotton threads with tassels at the end, or it may be made of long narrow strips of cotton material embroidered at the dangling ends. These decorated *tikkas* were often gifts from womenfolk and had hints of sentimental connections. There is a Sudanese folk saying which goes: "The hidden displays are in the *tikka* and *tagiya*".

Crocheted tagiya favoured by older men

The tagiya

The *tagiya* (skull cap) is hidden when the turban is worn around it and it also may frequently be handmade as a gift from some lady whose sentimental connection with the wearer is hidden – hence the double meaning of the quotation. Various types of *tagiyas* are worn all over the Muslim world, demonstrating very interesting regional varieties, and are nearly always objects of great intricacy and decoration. Sudan itself has many varieties, but most have a characteristically round shape as contrasted with the taller ones of the Nigerians to the west or the flat cylindrical shapes favoured in the Hijaz, the Somalis and others in East Africa. In the last three decades before this study, imported white crochet *tagiyas* came in from Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf. Currently the stiffer Pakistani *tagiya* is becoming prevalent.

Traditionally, white is considered Sunna – a tradition favoured by the Prophet – and white *tagiyas* are nearly always worn by old men. The simplest of these white *tagiyas* is called *al falasiya* (bankruptcy). It is made of two thicknesses of white material stiffened by being stitched together all over the surface, nowadays by machines, to give it a quilted effect. It is then gathered on to a circle. Another very simple one favoured by old men who are bald – because it is soft and warm – is made of crocheted, unbleached homespun cotton. More elaborately designed crocheted white *tagiyas* are made of mercerised white cotton thread and more recently of a rather stiff nylon thread which was originally imported for the making of fishermen's nets. This stiff thread holds the *tagiya* shape beautifully – but it is hot and harsh and not very popular.

The most typical *tagiya* of this region is called *tagiyat al mansaj* and is made of bands of intricate embroidery which are carried out on material stretched on a frame called *mansaj* This embroidery is done by counting the threads and the needle is passed from one hand to the other above and below the frame Afterwards the strips are cut off and joined together by openwork embroidered bands in the same colour, giving the *taqiya* some ventilation. This *tagiyat al mansaj* is totally covered in embroidery thread, sometimes in

Tagiyat al mansaj made on a frame

Tagiyat al gubba, dome-shaped cap

Galawoz style seen in towns

white but very commonly and typically in an orange colour which matches the man's tanned *markub* shoes. For some time, green was also a popular colour with young men but green *tagiyas* seem to have gone out of fashion now except amongst the Burhaniya Sufi sect. A cheaper version of this cap is called *um sharait* (mother of stripes). In this cap, the bands of material would be left plain white and only the central top circle and the joining openwork bands would be embroidered in white, orange or green – thus giving a striped effect. The most despised of these embroidered *tagiyas* is the one called *qannit albas*, dress up your arse, which is made of machine embroidery in white or orange silky threads on white cloth.

The turban

To wear a turban without a *tagiya* is considered very negligent and only the very poorest of the nomadic Arabs do this. In fact, the *tagiya* is embroidered in such a way as to give it a texture with some bite to it so that the turban can be firmly built on it. The turban, 'the crown of the Arabs', has survived in the Sudan as a splendid voluminous affair unlike its shrunken cousin in Egypt and North Africa. It is a very effective insulation and shade against the sun and sometimes is partly wrapped over the mouth in the cold, during dust storms, and as prevention from dehydration during the Ramadan fast. The turban also can be unwrapped at night

as a cover against mosquitoes, wind, and dust, or during siesta time as a cover against flies. The way in which each man wraps his turban is often unconsciously personal and individual in style but there are some recognised styles such as:

The *azaba* style is favoured by the Ansar, the followers of the Mahdi. It is worn with a tail of cloth hanging down the neck and was favoured by them as they considered it religiously desirable, or Sunna – a style favoured by the Prophet Mohamed.

The *fugara* style tends to slope downwards over each ear and is named after the *fekis* of these regions who are independent of either the Ansar or the Khatmiya. It is the style most commonly favoured by all mature and older men of this area.

Galawoz is a style much favoured by young men about town and considered vulgar by their elders. In this style, the turban is first twisted tightly all along its length and then this is wound around the head with gaps deliberately left between each twist, looking like a large white screw which gives it its name. The *tagiya* tends to get squeezed and screwed-up and tips out precariously at the top of this arrangement.

The *mashaikh* style is very formal and is made of tightly-wound turban of either less material or else very fine muslin or crepe which does not give a bulky appearance. The *ulama* from the Islamic Institute as well as those from Al Azhar,

Contemporary style of a turban with embroidered, and sometimes tasselled ends, in 2016

and others aspiring to such status, wear this wrapped around a stiff red *fez*. The leaders of the two great rival sects in the Sudan in the period between 1920s–1960s, Sayed Abdel Rahman Al Mahdi and Sayed Ali Al Mirghani, used to wear such turbans around a stiff embroidered *tagiya* called *meccawiya* (Meccan). Indeed such *tagiyas* are not available in the Sudan and can only be acquired from the Hijaz.

Another formal kind of turban is called *tartur*. Unlike the everyday Sudanese turban which is wound around the head every time the wearer puts it on, the *tartur* turban is built up in carefully ironed, regular folds around a conical *tagiya* and is removed from the head in one piece and carefully put aside till the next time it is worn. It is only taken apart and washed and ironed occasionally. This style was the regulation dress of Sudan Defence Force soldiers, policemen, prison warders and Palace Guards until the late 1950s – now it is only retained by the guards at the People's Palace and some bank messengers.

The jibba and the arragi

The *jibba* is a very simple round-necked garment with half-length sleeves, coming down to just around the knees. During the Mahdiya the *jibba* was more common as an outer garment than it is now, and in fact the name *jibba* is not in current usage. It is described by Krump as a patched garment worn by dervishes in Sennar. The ritual patches of the Sufi affectations of poverty were used as a sort of uniform by the Ansar. Today very elaborately and artificially patched *jibbas* are worn by a few mendicant praise singers and by the 'dancing dervishes' such as those at Um Dawan Ban and Hamad Al Nil. However, a sometime sleeveless *jibba,* made of *damouriya* is still favoured by the Hassaniya and Jamouiya nomads who graze west of the Nile not far from Omdurman. Even they, however, now call it *arragi,* which literally means 'a sweater', and for villagers and tradesmen of this area it is regarded as an undergarment. It is usually made of a very light material and is worn with the *sirwal* and *tagiya* only around the house or when working in the fields. For going out in the street, however, it should be covered either with the *tob* in the *gadla* style or with a *jallabiya*.

The jallabiya

The *jallabiya* derives its name from the same source as the *jallaba* who were responsible for spreading its popularity. Both words derive from the Arabic verb *jalaba,* meaning to carry goods from place to place. *Jallaba* is the generic name for merchants trading far away from

their own ethnic areas – it may be in the southern or western Sudan or even into Chad. However, the use of the *jallabiya* has spread into the farming community and amongst all urban classes, including the professionals. Only the camel-riding nomads have found this garment to be too unpractical. The materials favoured for the *jallabiya* are *damour, dabalan abu hamama* or poplin. Bridegrooms traditionally had a *jallabiya* of *sakarota*[13], natural silk, but nowadays this is replaced by tetron (polyester), a synthetic fibre. The *jallabiya* is a long white tunic with wide sleeves, and such garments can be seen worn by Nubians in one of the Faras frescoes dating back to the 6th century AD[14] and even before that on Nubian gift-bearers depicted on the walls of the tombs of Huy, the Viceroy of Kush under Tutankhamun. The cut of the *jallabiya* is determined by the width of the traditional Sudanese hand loom – one *duraa*. The straight central panel back and front is of this width. The side panels are each cut from one width but inwards, towards the top. The sleeves are made of one *duraa* set horizontally and joined at right angles to the central panel – and are worn as far as the wrist. Such varieties as exist in *jallabiya* styles are in the neck openings. Certain styles of neck openings in the past indicated certain group identifications. The *mirghaniya* or *khatmiya* style – sometimes also called *suakiniya* – has a little stiff collar standing upright at the neck and derives from the Hijazi *jallabiya* which is otherwise of a straighter and narrower cut. The *ansari* style has a wide circular neck with no fastenings and a breast pocket both at the front and the back. This style is also sometimes called *alallah, jinah um jakku* or *khanig fattis*. This style of *jallabiya* is still favoured by the Ansar, followers of the Mahdi, and members of the Umma party. The *afranji* style was in fashion from the early part of this century to the 1940s and has now almost disappeared – it was favoured by Greek and Syrian merchants and some Sudanese schoolboys. In this style, the neck and collar were made just as in a European shirt and the sleeves were also fastened with a buttoned cuff.

The most common *jallabiya* styles have rather low necks called *fatha*, a higher cut neck opening called *makfula*, or an opening like a fly front which conceals the buttons, or just three pear buttons fastening at the front. The necks and the pockets are bound and strengthened against wear and tear by a narrow, white cord called *gittan*. There used to be a little watch pocket set in the seam of the front panel with a little loop made in the *gittan* binding to fix the watch chain. Since wrist watches came into fashion, this loop has tended to disappear but many people retain the pocket in which they keep small change. The deep pockets at the sides are important, as the *jallaba* carry large sums of money in

them, sometimes wrapped in cloth bags, or in the deep pocket of the *arragi* underneath for further security.

The shal

It is considered inappropriate to go out in the *jallabiya* without *tagiya* and turban. And to make this dress more complete and give an extra touch of elegance, when going on a visit or to the mosque, many men carry a small shawl over their shoulders. Sometimes it is just carried folded over one shoulder, and sometimes very loosely brought in front of the neck. In cold weather it is often used to protect the face. During some *zikr*[15] prayer occasions it is fully opened out and spread across the back of both shoulders, because in the prayer situation the shoulders have spiritual importance as Muslims believe that every person has two guardian angels sitting on each shoulder during prayers. Most shawls are locally woven of *damour*, often mixed with a silky thread with special silky bands of white or black woven at each end. The frayed ends are sometimes tied into neat tassels by the womenfolk. Some woollen shawls are imported from Egypt or Arabia, but the best of these come from Kashmir in Pakistan and are of very fine wool with fine, closely-worked embroidery in traditional Persian motifs.

The guftan

This is a long overcoat of fine wool – grey or dark in colour – and is worn mainly by *qadis*, or *ulama*, judges and scholars. Other religious leaders in the Sudan may occasionally wear this style, and many men of the north wear it in cold weather, especially those Halfawis, Dongolawis and Shaygis who have been in Egypt[16]. It is cut in the same style as a *jallabiya* but is open right down the front. The *abaya* is much more commonly worn by the Sudanese as an overcoat and is usually made of very light wool. The favourite material is English white worsted but sometimes black or brown is worn. Although it originates from Hijaz, this garment has become so traditional in the Sudan that it is now part of the official regalia of the Sudanese ambassadors when presenting their credentials to the heads of states to whom they are accredited. The University of Khartoum has its official academic gowns based on the *abaya* as well. It is really a very simple cloak made of one large piece of material folded over the shoulders, split down the front and joined straight at the sides allowing just little slits at each side for the hands. The whole garment is bound with an especially strong *gittan* which may be very plain or slightly contrasting in colour.

Moustaches, beards and hairstyles

In this part of the Sudan moustaches and beards have sometimes reflected certain political trends. During the Turkish regime, some dandified Sudanese copied the exaggerated Turkish moustaches curled upwards to a sharp point and fixed with gum Arabic; others made fun of them and called them *shanab abu kadis*, the cat's whiskers. During the Mahdiya such moustaches disappeared and more bushy, drooping moustaches and trimmed, rounded beards became the rule. Pious men of the Jaaliyin were described by one singer as having "luminous faces, and rounded beards". The small, pointed goatee beard of the Hijazi men was considered pretentious. During the 1930s small moustaches ala Chaplin and Hitler were sometimes worn. These were called *nusf rubat*, half a necktie, and were possibly worn in defiance to the British. In the 1960s some South Sudanese students and intelligentsia grew Fidel Castro style beards or fastened their wrist watch on the right hand or wore bracelets made of giraffe's or elephant's tails as a means of identifying with Anyanya Guerillas in the South.

Earlier travellers often describe men of this area as having abundant hair greased with butter and oil. This kind of dishevelled hair is recognised by the settled people as being something typical of the 'Arabs' and is described as *shaafa*, dishevelled. Bedouin Arabs tended to let their hair grow out of negligence but would have it shaven off when they came into town. Shaved heads were de rigueur amongst the Mahdists and this remained the rule right up until the 1920s. A man would have his head shaven all over; this style was called *jabana*, after the round, shiny Sudanese coffee pot. As soon as the hair grew more than about a centimetre long, it was all shaven off again. In the 1920s those men in contact with Europeans began to grow a little more hair at the top – keeping it short on the sides and back, and this style was called *carre*, square. Older people had a haircut called *nemra itnain*, number two. *Carre* was common amongst young effendis and Gordon College students. At first when these young men returned to their rural homes they were criticised and made fun of by their fathers and made to go to the barber and shave it all off, but gradually the style became accepted. In the 1940s this top hair was grown even longer and combed forward in a remarkable peak called *tiffa*. Young men went around with combs in their back pockets which they whipped out every now and then to arrange their *tiffas*. It was very much resented by the 'decent' people who would comment *amil tiffatak tashbh al shaytan*, 'you look like the devil with your tiffa'. Somehow in the 1970s it gradually disappeared. By 1973 the very bushy, rounded Afro cut and side whiskers had become very common in the towns, but were still the subject of a great deal of criticism and lampooning in the newspaper cartoons.

Facial scarification

An important part of the appearance of men and women in riverain Sudan is the facial scarification. Facial scars were cut with sharp razors. The sharp razors were one of two kinds: the medicinal *fasd adar*, and the magico-religious or tribal identification *shilukh*. Tiny scars were cut for medicinal purposes as counter irritation at the corners of the eyelids or just below the lower lid for various eye troubles. Small cuts were also made on the temples at the back of the neck for acute headaches and at the corners of the mouth for babies' teething troubles. Some patterns of scars antedate the present tribal groupings of this area and are almost certainly pre-Islamic in origin, as some of the personages represented on the Naqa temples have the *shilukh*. Since this thesis was submitted Professor Yusuf Fadl has published a book on Sudanese scarification[17]. More recently it has been suggested that some particular patterns owe their designs to magic symbols used by some of the Sheikhs in the protective amulets which they write. In fact, it is interesting that varieties in facial scarification patterns are visual marks of the sort of internal group identification, which in other countries or other areas of the Sudan might be indicated by varieties in dress items or styles.

The Shaygiya and some Dongolawis have three lateral scars on each cheek with the middle scar in line with the mouth, the Rubatab and the Jaaliyin have three vertical lines but the Rubatab tend to have the scars larger and closer together. The Abdullab draw a single horizontal line through the middle of three vertical lines. Sheikh Al Tayib of Um Merrihi north of Omdurman used to cut an 'H' or a square sometimes called *sillim al sheikh al tayib*, Sheikh Al Tayib's ladder. This was copied by members of the Sammaniya sect and then the Jamouiya, Jimaab and Sururab tribal groups. Another pattern is *mudgag wad badr*, Badr's son's *saaf* pounding hammer. It is 'T' shaped and common in the Gezira and Blue Nile area.

Facial scarification is disappearing now but was once a remarkable feature of the typical appearance of the riverain Sudanese. The different patterns were used as important social indicators of religious and tribal affiliation. The same groups mostly used the same patterns for men and women except that some groups using the three vertical scars added a horizontal scar at the base in the case of women. Women's scars were considered more beautiful if the wounds were kept wider – the open wounds were stuffed with medicinal antiseptic herbal paste to achieve this effect[18].

Riverain male costume of the 20th century throughout the life cycle

Early boyhood

Little boys in villages used to wear a *sirwal* to just below the knee. Above this they wore a short-sleeved *arragi*. Both these garments were made of *damouriya* or *dabalan*. Bedouin boys used to wear a short *tob* instead of an *arragi* when tending their flocks as they could better adapt this according to their needs in the sun. The poorest of them, if his *tob* was too short to drape, tied its ends around the back of his neck. Little boys' heads were shaven except for a little round piece at the top called *gussa*, and from this a little plait called *gambur* might be kept and allowed to grow until it was ceremoniously shaven off at the tomb of the local protective saint[19]. Only when this was done was the child considered to have passed out from the dangerous fragile stage of babyhood.

Such little boys in the villages and small towns might have just one *jallabiya* kept for best occasions. It was the custom for every child to have at least one new garment for the Eid. For the *jallabiya* of the child, *dabalan* was considered sufficient but in the late 1920s a pale, grey striped material called *ghazali* came into fashion. Then, in the 1930s an off-white cheap material from Japan called *wilaya* appeared. By the 1950s poplins in pale blue, green and beige colours were being worn. White *jallabiyas* remained the uniform of boys in elementary school until 1969, when the then Minister of Education, Dr Muhieddin Sabir, decided to make Sudanese boys look like their Egyptian counterparts. Very often a boy would get his first *jallabiyas* on the occasion of his circumcision. However, the candidate for circumcision was first ritually dressed as a miniature bridegroom – in a white *arragi* of very light material and a relatively small, white *tob* – sometimes *bengali*, sometimes *surrati*. Fuller description cannot be given than that already given by Abdulla El Tayib[20]. "The boy was dressed to appear like a girl. His eyes were edged with *kohl*. Gold and silver ornaments were placed around his neck and wrists. He was also made to wear the long coral wedding necklace and other necklaces contained beads of bloodstone which was believed to stop the bleeding and to speed up the healing process".

Adolescence and early manhood

As is often the case in almost any culture in the world the period of early manhood is the time for male assertiveness and the maximum amount of display and daring appears in a man's clothing. In this area of the Sudan this has been limited by a number of factors. One factor has been in the basic simplicity and puritanical attitudes of this society and the social pressures to conform. Another factor lies in the remarkable stamping out of individuality and the subservience of young males to the patriarchal male family head. This has been so much the case that young men would sometimes only flaunt their new boldness in style in the company of their peers outside the home – for example in clubs – and would adopt a more conventional and modest dress in the presence of their elders. Another limiting factor lies in the paucity of the basic material available. In this area of the Sudan only young men affect the *sideri* waistcoat, worn with a particularly baggy form of *sirwal* called *sirwal boja*. Together with this outfit, they carry sticks with fancy handles and wear their *tagiyas* at a rakish angle forward over one eye as mentioned in a song: "The brazen city-type, wearing his *tagyia* lopsided". These young men also wear the turban in the style previously described as *galawoz* which coils loosely around the head. Sometimes they only make a gesture of wearing the turban and in fact have it loosely lying around their necks and shoulders. When such a young man wears a *tob* at all it is usually very white and longer than usual and the two ends are meant to float impressively at the back.

The bridegroom

When a young man gets married he is expected to be more responsible with his money. At the time of his marriage a young man is dressed and ornamented in a remarkable way. The traditional dress and regalia of the bridegroom are said to be very old in origin and J.W. Crowfoot interestingly traces some of the bridegroom regalia to the ancient Nile Valley cult of Osiris[21]. The dressing up of the Sudanese bridegroom takes place in stages during the several days of the wedding ceremony. First there is *laylat al henna*, the night of the *henna*, and this usually takes place at the bridegroom's home accompanied by a feast. After all the guests have eaten, the bridegroom is installed on an elegantly covered *angareb* (rope strung wooden bed) in a prominent position. The bridegroom's hands and feet are anointed with perfumed oil called *mahlabiya* and *henna*, soaked and pounded into a paste, then applied by one or more of the bridegroom's close female relatives to his hands and feet. One of these female relatives

sings a traditional song called *al adil wa al zain* praising his generosity and good looks. Next comes the *jirtig*, where the bridegroom is dressed for the *sera* procession to the bride's home. Here, as with the circumcision ceremony, certain female ornaments are worn on this special occasion only. Around his right wrist he wears a silver bracelet – usually the crescent-shaped *hafiza* and also a skein of red silk hanging down in a long tassel on which a green or blue bead is threaded. Traditionally, a silver ring with a red stone was worn, but in towns and amongst the more sophisticated, a plain, gold band called a *dibla* is worn by both bride and bridegroom. According to custom, three necklaces are worn: one of red silk with a large silver pectoral medallion on it called a *farajalla*, another made of large agate beads called *soumit* and the third is a *sibha*, prayer beads made of wooden black and red beads. These beads are first soaked in milk and *zirria* – the water of soaked and sprouting *dura* grains – these being symbols of fertility. Around the bridegroom's temples a handkerchief is tied to prevent the perfumed unguents with which his hair has been anointed from running down into his eyes. Onto this band is sewn a gold or silver crescent-shaped ornament, the *hafiza*. This is indeed an old Egyptian practice. There is a prince on the wall of the temple at Naqa wearing just such a headband. Perhaps to counteract this rather feminine finery the bridegroom carries symbols of male power. In his right hand he has the *korbaj*, a whip which he will later use in the dancing party where in a frenzy of masochistic eroticism, young men will challenge him to beat them. Over his left shoulder on a strap he carries a fine new sword in a leather scabbard. For this occasion, the bridegroom could wear a *sirwal* of white *dabalan* and a *tob* crossed over in the *gadla* style. This would be of the finest material he could afford, the favourite being white silk with yellow borders *surrati* for the rich, and white cotton lawn with red edges *bengali* for the poorer folk. More recently the bridegroom would appear for this occasion in a *jallabiya* of the best quality poplin or *sakarota* of Japanese natural, coloured silk. If the unguents in the hair are dispensed with, a finely embroidered orange colour *tagiya* may be worn. Many bridegrooms nowadays try to have a full European suit made to wear for the *sera* procession and the *gutt al rahat* ceremony, where they will be seen by the largest number of people. This would signal that the bride acquired a husband of high status. A song dating back to the 1930s sung by girls playing the *hirdifa* hopping game expresses their longing for such a groom: "Oh Sharif Al Hindi, I desire an effendi, an effendi with his suit (European)". In those days, most effendis aspired to wear a suit of white cotton drill or *damour* for at least part of the wedding ceremony; nowadays suits of a heavier, darker material are preferred.

The dress of adult men at the market

Three different styles of adult men's dress may commonly be seen side by side at many points in this area – at the market, at the Friday prayers, on the river ferries. We will now examine each of them, one by one, as I found them gathered together one Saturday morning at Al Damer which has a permanent *suq* and a weekly camel market on Saturdays.

The jallaba dress

This is typified by Saleh Al Haj, 45 years old, of the Rubatab people. He is a tailor specialising in women's dresses. As he sits at his machine, he wears a fairly long *arragi* of thin white material with a faint, woven stripe in it. He wears his *sirwal* of white *dabalan* to mid-calf length as he works. The *tikka* of his *sirwal* is made of a narrower piece of material to which his daughter has added some decorative tassels with embroidery thread. A few like this are hanging up for sale in his shop. To go to the town hall, he puts on his clean *jallabiya* which was not made by him but by another men's tailor. The *jallabiya* seams are neatened by hand by girls in their homes and is in a style called *amoud*, pillar. His turban is made of 4 yards of best quality Tootal muslin from Manchester. It is machine-hemmed by him and decorated with tiny tassels of white thread by his daughters. To complete this outfit, he throws around his neck a shawl of white *damour* with woven silky, white borders and neat fringes at each end – this he has purchased from the women traders at Shendi railway station. He wears *jezma magfula* of black colour in moccasin style from Bata.

Farmers' dress

One of the tailor's customers is a farmer aged 75 of the Majazib from Timerab on the West Bank of the Nile. He comes every Saturday to the market riding on his donkey. He wears *sirwal* of white *dabalan*, clean but not ironed. He also wears a white *arragi* of *dabalan* with fairly long sleeves. Over this he wears a *tob* of 4 metres of *bengali* in the *gadla* style. His *tagiya* is white and made by one of his daughters of crocheted white cotton – he is related to the *fugara*, holy men, of Al Damer and despises anything coloured. He also despises carrying any kind of shopping bag and prefers to stuff his purchases into his pockets or the saddlebags on his donkey. He carries a stick of white wood curved slightly at one end and *sibha* of plain wooden beads, and high up on his left arm he wears his knife in its leather sheath.

Bedouin dress

The settled people of this area always refer to the bedouins who come to trade in their towns and villages or for seasonal work at harvest time as 'Arabs'. Many different tribes occupy the grazing lands away from the cultivated area but in Al Damer the Hassaniya are quite numerous and quite distinct in appearance. They mostly graze sheep and unlike the Kababish beyond them to the west they do not have many camels, but usually come to town on donkeys. One of them is Hassan Hassuna, aged 36. He wears a turban around his head in a style which is intended to shade the face and neck. Under it is an old woollen cap of brown colour. His shirt is an *arragi* with a very low cut neck but strongly lined all over the shoulder and sleeveless. His *sirwal* is not at all baggy and comes to only just below the knee. He carries a leather bag – a *khortaya*. On his left arm he wears a knife. Around his neck he wears a leather thong with amulets strung on it – they are mostly hidden inside his shirt. He also has a rather shabby *tob* with him but it is folded and flung across one shoulder. The colour of all his garments is a yellowy-brown earthy colour as they are seldom, if ever, washed; water for him may sometimes be a matter of two days' journey away and far too precious for washing. His shoes are the kind known as *shigayana* or *tamut takhali* which means 'you die, you leave them behind' – they are of very strong cowhide with three layers of leather for the sole.

Influences affecting women's costume

Trade from the West and the East

Although the main trade route with the Sudan followed the Nile, there were other travellers from the west, mostly pious pilgrims from West Africa making their way to Mecca. Many of these *fallata*[22] have specialised in trading in beads for centuries. Bovill tells us of quantities of beads reaching Africa for example from Venice, via the Mediterranean ports and trans-Saharan routes to Songhai and Mali[23]. According to Arkell[24], beads were also manufactured in Wadai until fairly recently. Some of these *fallata* tradesmen, as they made the return journey from Mecca after completing their pilgrimage, also brought back beads, having bought up a stock of these in the Hijaz that originated from other parts of the Islamic domains: Indian quartz, bloodstones, and *sibhas* made of turned sandalwood, as well as beads of semi-precious stones such as moonstones, agates and carnelions from Yemen, pierced and polished by the Yemeni

A rustic Hassaniya man seen in Al Damer in 1974 and a Jaali villager from riverain Sudan

Jews[25]. These *fallata* tradesmen can still be seen carrying on this same trade in some streets in Omdurman, Wad Madani and Kassala, and dealing in quantities of wooden *sibhas* outside the main mosque in Omdurman. In the past, they used to wander from village to village along the Nile banks peddling these, but it seems they no longer do so since the railway and other modern modes of transport made people of this area themselves more mobile.

The women of riverain Sudan have not been as much affected by the trade of goods from India, available to the women of eastern Sudan. Possibly this is because of the long and well established indigenous cotton weaving industry in the Nile valley. But some items from India did become very popular and sought-after in the caravans reaching Berber, Shendi and Sennar from the East – such as *garmasis,* a brightly coloured silk veil, the *surrati* – a yellow silk sari, and the *tob bengali* – a very cheap simple white sari used as a *tob* by widows and older women. Also, India supplied the much sought-after sandalwood and its expensive oil extract *sandaliya* as well as *mahlabiya* oil and coconut oil for hairdressing and perfumery.

Influence and trade from Egypt and Britain

In Egypt, such famous towns as Mehalla al Kubra were centres of the weaving industry for centuries and the products of the famous Coptic weavers were sent far and wide. In Burckhardt, one can read of the many items brought specially for women from Egypt. As with India, so with Egypt, it seems that the women of riverain Sudan accepted whichever basic items these countries produced that were acceptable to the established indigenous costume, but did not accept outré styles of clothing or jewellery from them. Only during the time of the Condominium (1889–1956) did change in women's underdress reflect changing fashions in Egypt, and it was during this period that many French words such as jupe, plissè, and cloche, came into use in connection with dressmaking. Sudanese women first adopted some European fashions and learned French fashion terminology through Egyptian and Syrian women amongst whom they had social contacts, and being co-religionists probably innovations were deemed acceptable. The social ties between British and Sudanese women were not so close, and the British women were looked upon as infidels outside the law. What they wore was perceived as something quite foreign and even indecently exposing. The spheres of influence where British women did have some impact, were in hospitals and schools. The nurses' uniforms of the Sudan were modelled after that of British nurses. Girls' education on a large scale was started by the British. Girls' school uniforms in the Sudan were just like the summer school uniforms of

British schoolgirls. Another fundamental change which seems to have come about through the early boarding schools is the change in Sudanese girls' nightwear. Until the mid 1940s girls in Omdurman Training College were issued with black *tobs* to wrap around themselves for nightwear. By the 1950s all girls in boarding schools were wearing nightdresses and dressing gowns – and this fashion quickly spread and now all Sudanese brides in the towns and larger villages have pretty, nylon nightdresses. Woollen jumpers and cardigans began to be worn in winter time and more recently, schoolgirls have taken to wearing fashionable trousers under their dresses during cold weather.

Economic and social changes

As in many other societies, women tend, paradoxically, to be more conservative and yet often more interested and aware of changes in fashion. In the Sudanese gendersegregated society, women did not go to the marketplace or shops to choose their own clothes. All such purchases were made by men – thus giving them not only economic control but a choice of delaying or accelerating their womenfolk's access to new goods and styles. The whole play and interplay of psychological and sociological forces whereby women manipulated this situation may well deserve a study on its own. Effectively, the spoken and sung word was the usual way in which the women of this attenuated riverain society got to know about fashion changes and the availability of new materials. Almost every new kind of *tob* became mentioned in the latest love songs and the varieties of the *tobs* themselves were often named after important issues. Their many names give an idea of the growing cosmopolitan awareness after independence. Earlier on, and stemming from Egyptian influences, the increased sophistication in dress-making introduced many French clothing terms like cloche, plissé, japonais. Egypt's own modernisation owed a lot to French influence since the time of Ismail Pasha. The spread of girls' education, the mass media, and the travelling of more and more Sudanese women to Europe since the 1950s has also greatly broadened their awareness of, and access to, wider choices and varieties. Nevertheless, a curious mixture of conservation and adaptation meant that there still exists a distinct Sudanese women's costume. We shall study this in detail later. The great changes in the economic and social life of educated Sudanese women like their expansion into a wider sphere of employment has increased their economic independence and their access to market goods, resulting in quick changes in fashion and much more variety in choice. Their demands for variety and novelty have affected the market which seeks to supply

the demand. Social changes due to increased emancipation have blurred the edges between status groups i.e. unmarried girls can adopt modes of dress and cosmetics formerly reserved until the marriage ceremony. Barriers between classes are blurred also, for sex workers[26] and girls considered of 'good family' often patronise the same dressmaker and the same hairdresser and come out with the same styles.

The basic items of women's costume

The basic items of women's costume are described below item by item. Some of these items such as the *tanura* and the *gurgab* have completely disappeared, some have disappeared and then reappeared in another form such as the *malakof*, a long underskirt which has reappeared as the maxi-skirt, whereas some other items such as the *rahat* and the *garmasis* have been retained for ritual occasions only.

The tanura

Little girls in this part on the Sudan used to wear the *tanura* skirt. This was a very simple skirt of originally plain *damour* and later of *damouriya*, gathered onto a string worn around the waist. The skirt was worn long down to the ankles.

The rahat

These leather skirts were made of masses of very thin leather strips hanging down from a strong cord of twisted leather around the waist. The *rahat* has a very long history in the Sudan, and is also very widely spread in its distribution. It is listed as being at one time one of the exports of the Sudan to Egypt. It was always made by women from the hides of animals killed in the *halal* way according to religious injunctions for normal domestic consumption. Usually, it would be the mother who would make the *rahat* to fit the girl concerned so that it hung to just below the girl's knee. Usually the leather was left in its natural colour, but in recent times the ornamental symbolic *rahat* used ritually in the Sudanese wedding ceremony *gutt al rahat* is dyed in red or purple. Formerly the *rahat* was decorated with a row of cowrie shells around the waist, or a few cowrie shells would hang down attached to one of the cords at the side. Older girls did not wear cowrie shells on their *rahat* but attached them to their hair instead. The age at which a girl began to wear the *rahat* was not clearly defined but

definitely the *gutt al rahat* at her wedding was the last time she wore it, as the name of the ceremony implies. For this occasion, the bride would wear an especially beautiful *rahat* and no other garment and her well-oiled torso and bare breasts would be an important display of her youthful beauty and a source of pride to her family. Her neck and chest would be heavily decorated with all the beads and gold and other regalia of the ritual called *jirtig*.

The garin

This was a shawl worn to cover the breasts of unmarried girls when out and about amongst strangers, and also to protect the spine when out in the sun grazing animals or walking in the fields. It was usually a piece of cloth of reddish colour such as is still favoured by girls in eastern Sudan and was brought around under the right armpit and tied up *(magrum)* over the left shoulder. For festive occasions such as the Eid or weddings there were two kinds of silky *garin* used. One was called *garin anaj*, this means *garin* pertaining to the *anaj* – a word generally used in this area to refer to anything pre-Islamic and indigenous prior to the Arab infiltration. The other is the *garin ab sihali* which was lighter and silkier than the *garin anaj* and of blue, purple and yellow colours. This *garin* gets its name from the blue and yellow salamander lizard.

The garmasis

This is a very special silky veil used on three ritual occasions of rites of passage. The bride is entirely wrapped in it like a mysterious parcel when she is brought in first to the dancing arena. The bride used to use the *garmasis* as a night cover sometimes tied over one shoulder on her wedding night prior to the diaphanous nightdresses coming into fashion in the 1950s. The next time the married woman acquires a new *garmasis* is when she gives birth, and this is spread over the lower half of her body as she lies on the bed to which she must be confined for the ritual forty days. The *garmasis* would also be used in the same way for a girl who had been circumcised, and she would remain covered in it until the wound had healed. Newly circumcised boys are also covered with the *garmasis* in this way. The *garmasis* is made of silk, real or artificial, woven in stripes and checks of orange, red and purple across a yellow warp. Its shiny silk-effect is very important and the cheaper ones of artificial silk have a spurious shine on them attained by a thin soaking of gum Arabic and heat applied by pressure from hot rollers. As far as can be remembered, the *garmasis* is almost always imported from

Groom with his bride covered in the garmasis

India. It is said that the wives of some rich merchants always used the *garmasis* as a night garment rather than the ordinary *firka*.

The firka

The *firka*[27] is a heavier, coarser cover of the same dimensions as the *garmasis*, but made of black, purple and dark red cotton, woven with distinctive patterns of stripes not covering the whole garment but ending in points. One better quality kind is called *um safiha* and has

many bands of a mercerised silky, white thread. It is now used as a night garment. The married woman is supposed to lie under it naked waiting for her husband. She would also use it for when she is oiling her body with *dilka*, an aromatic paste, and wraps it loosely around her when she is sitting under the *shamla*, the blanket used over the *dukhan*, an aromatic smoke fire. A woman will sometimes wrap the *firka* around her as a waist wrapper or maybe tied over one shoulder while she is making *kisra*, unleavened bread, as this job is done on an iron or terracotta griddle over a wood fire and can be a very smoky and hot occupation.

The gurgab

This garment is a simple seamless cloth, usually about 4 metres in length and about 2 metres wide, wrapped closely to the body to cover it conveniently from below the armpit to below the knees. A wrapper worn in this manner is still worn by men in some southern areas of Nigeria and by women in most parts of West Africa. Otherwise it is worn around the waist and reaches to the ankles. Krump[28] describes this wrapper saying that "both men and women, wind around their hips a coarsely woven cloth about three spans wide and several ells long and with this they cover themselves...aside from that the upper body of young and old of both sexes is bared". Later he goes on to describe the nobility as having a blue and white wrapper "not unlike a bed sheet in length". During the Mahdiya when all women of this area were compelled to go veiled in the *tob*, the *gurgab* became an undergarment. Nevertheless, striped material for the *gurgab* retained its popularity for a long time. Until the 1950s, the *gurgab* was still worn by many women underneath the *fustan*, the dress which was increasingly being worn, and until today some old women keep to the *gurgab* and do not wear *libas*, knickers.

The malakof

The *malakof* is a long underskirt which was worn by urban women in the first three decades of this century. It functioned as a more sophisticated sewn version of the *gurgab* worn by women at that time under their dresses in order to cover the lower part of their legs. Its lower hem was often decorated by a gathered flounce or a border of lace. It was mentioned by a naughty Omdurman poet about a girl he saw on the tram of Abu Rouf, "The Abu Rouf tram took off and left me behind; Taking the well-known beauty; The one wearing the *malakof;* Oh, but for ten slaps from her hand...or more". The *malakof* is still worn by some women of the *sharifs* of the Khatmiya at Sinkat and with it they wear a short blouse called *sideri* – with

little silver buttons on it. This does seem to be copied from India and survives in this remote part of the Red Sea Hills amongst a very exclusive group of people. It is quite a curiosity – otherwise the *malakof* would seem to be something that came and went, for as such it is not worn now anywhere else in the Sudan.

The tarha

This is a short head veil 2 metres in length worn by young girls particularly when being sent on shopping errands or on the way to school. It is also worn by adult women about the house especially when they are likely to move from room to room or be encountered by male members of the extended family. An adult woman puts on a *tarha* when praying. Midwives and nurses wear white *tarhas* over their white uniform dresses. Secondary schoolgirls always used to wear the *tarha* in class and still do so in religion lessons.

The fustan

This garment has come to take second place in importance to the *tob*. The *fustan* frock remained for many years a relatively plain, simple garment with a round neck and short sleeves with a gathered skirt worn to below the calf. Usually the material for the *fustan*, 3.5 metres, was bought for a woman by her husband and then sent to be made up by the tailor. One of these tailors in Al Damer[29] supplied an interesting list of styles each with its own name and an approximate date of its appearance. From the 1940s there were *sedr al balto* – bodice of the suit, *kom farida* – sleeves of Farida (of Egypt), and *cloche* and double *cloche* from the French word for bell. From the 1950s there appeared *japonez* – from the French word japonaise, and from the 1960s *ish al namil* – a style known as honeycomb, because of the many tucks on the bust. When the first dresses which were cut all in one piece appeared, they were called *shawal*, meaning sack, and indeed women still distinguish between *fustan* and *shawal*. With the increase in sewing machines in private hands and with increased literacy and accessibility to fashion magazines from abroad, the styles of the *fustan* have reached endless varieties that it is now no longer possible to name every new one of them. The *fustan* frock has increased in importance and emphasis in direct ratio to which the *tob* has become more and more an outdoor garment.

The gunulla

A very simple cool undergarment like the English petticoat sometimes worn under the *fustan* and sometimes by itself under the *tob* around the house in hot weather, or by country women engaged in the fields. The *gunulla* was made of a very cheap, light-weight material usually of a bright colour, but never patterned. Of the two materials favoured for the *gunulla*, the cheaper one was called *batista* and a closer woven one called *lambric*[30]. This garment has gone out of fashion now and these materials can hardly be found in the shops. The *gunulla* was sewn so that the top of the dress finished under the armpits and was held up by shoulder straps – the skirt was usually tightly gathered. This garment replaced the *firka* which used to be worn around the house wrapped around the body just below the armpits. The *gunulla* itself went out of fashion because it came to be replaced by the *fustan al nom*, nightdress, a very loose sleeveless garment gathered on to a high yoke, which was copied from the Egyptian women. Made of cheap, light printed material, this garment could not be worn under the *fustan* and so the *gunulla* came to mean the short nylon usually ready-made undergarment now sometimes worn under a dress, particularly if the dress is made of a transparent material[31].

Amulets and purses

From babyhood females wore amulets and charms sewn up in little pouches and tied to them by string. The baby's amulets would be on a string around its belly and the older girls often wore them in neat little leather, cubed pouches on strings around their necks. Some had little silver cube amulet cases and a few had silver or gold ones. Generally speaking, the more mature the wearer, the more important and decorative became the amulet case. The protective charms were usually written by the local *feki* according to the need at the time, like premature abortion, teething troubles, bed wetting, sterility and others.

Protective amulet fastened around a baby's waist

A most remarkable traditional feature of the married Sudanese woman's apparel was the many partitioned purse called *matbaga or mufhada*, which is square in shape with finely-

tooled patterns and many compartments covered by one large flap which is held by a tight band. Market women have very big purses and they can vary in size from 2 to 8 inches, and many women attach their amulets and some of their household keys to the strings at the side of the purse.

Hijab, protective amulet worn on the arm

The kaskasiga

The only hat worn by Sudanese women is the rustic sunhat of conical shape made of *saaf*, palm leaves, similar to those worn by peasants in South East Asia. It was worn by women in the Northern Province on long walks in the sun or by women traders not finding any shade in the market. It has become quite rare now but until recently was seen at Shendi railway station. Its appearance as part of men's costume was noted at Shendi Market by Burckhardt in 1813[32].

A mufhada, and a woman wearing the leather purse. It hangs on a double string of red gittan around the neck and hangs well down to thigh level where it is concealed and well protected in a woman's most inviolable region! To get at it, a woman has to bring it forward from under her tob and skirt.

This elderly woman from the Shaygiya, a tribe whose facial scarification consists of three horizontal lines on each cheek, is wearing a kaskasiga sunhat over her tob al farda with the distinctive blue border. She is wearing a blouse called nawena 'we have intended' indicating her intention to go on the Hajj pilgrimage. Other signs that she has performed the ritual are the headscarf she is wearing under the tob and the string of rosary beads wrapped around her wrist.

Footwear

Because of the intense heat, the impossibility of going barefoot at certain times of the year has ensured that there has probably always been some kind of footwear in this part of the Sudan. Married women wore an elegant flat shoe called *markub abu gadum* with pointed toe and heel and a decorative point over the arch, usually tanned in orange or dark red, with two or three layers of cowhide used for the sole. Later the uppers were cut very open so that half of the toes appeared and the toes had to be bunched-up in a special way to hold the shoe on; these were called *markub kashif* and are still worn by some older women. *Shib-shibs* and *karkabs* were worn inside the house. *Shib-shibs* had a flat leather sole and just one strap over the toes and the scraping noise of the heel as it was dragged along the ground gave it its name. *Karkab* is also an onomatopoeic word describing the noise of its wooden sole on the ground. The *karkab's* high wooden sole was carved locally and sometimes quite crudely, but occasionally a fine pattern was etched on its surface. It was worn around the house when there was a lot of water around, such as when washing clothes and dishes, and sometimes worn to the well to protect the feet from the mud. In the days when the *tob* was less transparent and revealing, shoes were a focal point of a woman's attire and an important item of a bride's dowry.

From the top: karkab, markub kashif, arousa plastic house-shoe and sifinja flip-flops

Perhaps because of this visibility focus, the fashions in shoes became the subject of much conversation, criticism and intense resistance as can be implied from such derogatory names given to new styles as *gadum al samak*, meaning fish mouth, for the first shoes with pointed toes, or *dababat*, artillery tanks, for the first platform sole shoes. *Bartouch* is the name given to worn down old shoes which are just used around the house as slippers. The word *bartouch* derives from the Aramaic word *burtash* meaning an old shoe[33]. The use of this word is considered by some people as rather vulgar.

Henna

The decorating of the hands and feet with *henna* is very old and widespread in Arabian lands and in North Africa. Its function may be ritual, decorative and partly medicinal. It is plausible that painting of the soles of the feet represented a sort of poor man's shoe for the barefoot one. Formally, *henna* was applied as a plain lining to the soles of the feet, palms of the hands and fingertips. Later, more elaborate patterns were applied to the bride and the *nafasa*, new mother, but quite possibly the stimulus for the decoration of hands and feet with *henna* might have been due to the visual emphasis focused on hands and feet at the time when the *tob* hid all else. In riverain Sudan, *henna* ritually marks a person as being in a state of transition during the rites of passage. As it dyes the skin in a durable fashion, a person so marked out, be it a bride, a bridegroom or a newly circumcised boy, can be seen to be in that state of ritual transition from one status in the community to a new one. It is interesting to note that in all these rites, *henna* is always applied at the preparatory stages of the ceremony. Even if it is not renewed after the first application, its last traces remain on the fingernails for about six months. More recently, newer and more elaborate patterns have evolved as the result of the easier application of the *henna* paste by the disposable plastic syringe. These latest varieties of *henna* patterns have their rather amusing topical names like *mufastan* – serrated, *kubri shambat* – Shambat bridge, and *shataranj* – chequered, and have become so prolific that two or three booklets have been printed and are being sold at '*dilka* stores', cosmetic shops in Jamhuria Street in Khartoum, illustrating their various patterns.

Hairstyles

The importance of hair symbolism and even hair fashion in this part of the Sudan is so interesting as to be worthy of a separate detailed study. As a theme, it recurs frequently in

folklore with three main themes: hair as symbolic of touch and contact between the opposite sexes, hair as containing 'magical' power affecting its owner, and hair as symbolic of certain ethnic origins. In riverain Sudan it is desirable to have long hair, not too frizzy, and it should be jet black in colour. Hair which is too frizzy was considered indicative of some 'slave' or African blood in the owner's antecedents and hair which was too fair and too straight was indicative of some other alien racial origins such as Turkish. The kind of hair preferred was long black hair of moderate curliness and all hair dressing techniques aimed to achieve this standard.

Firstly, little girls would have their hair plaited in little cornrows tight against the skull and a little tuft was left at the front or it was made into two little plaits at the side of the face. At the advent of puberty around about the age of 10, such a girl would be taken to the tomb of a local saint and there all the hair of the head would be shaven off. This ceremony is called the *zayana* and it indicates the association of hair as a vehicle of spiritual power[34]. Afterwards as the hair grew, it would be plaited into the style used by adult married women. This in itself has undergone some recent changes. As was mentioned earlier, most unmarried women in riverain Sudan went about with their heads uncovered. Slave women were supposed to go with their heads uncovered in the presence of their masters. The hair was worn in a plaited style called *rasha,* spreading, and the general shape and appearance of this style is similar to many pictures of slave and dancing girls in ancient Egyptian times as fairly accurately depicted in Cailliaud's book. The hair was then parted in the middle and the hair was plaited in rows of parallel plaits down the sides of the head in layers. The top layer of plaits finished just above the ear and then each layer of the hair was spread out and stiffened with *wadaq,* mutton fat. This fashion still prevails amongst some of the Hassaniya nomad women who occasionally come down to the riverside villages and towns selling milk and clarified butter called *semna*. In the early part of this century this style began to go completely out of fashion with the settled riverain women. One informant remembers as a small boy in Kassala, the women of his family (originally Jaaliyin from Al Damer) discussing the new style of *mushat al dugag,* the fine plaiting, and asking their *khadim,* female servant, to go and learn it from some of the other *khadims* in the town who had just come with this 'new style' possibly from Omdurman. This *mushat al dugag* has remained in fashion for more than half a century and has come to be very much part of the riverain Sudanese women's typical appearance. For this style, the cranium was divided by the hairdresser into four quarters. The two back quarters were plaited close to the head in parallel rows following the curve of the head backwards. The front two

quarters called *al masira* were sometimes plaited in little plaits and finally joined in one plait tucked behind the ear. Alternatively, the front hair was carefully oiled and combed and brought with a smooth curve well down over the temple and tucked down under the ear. Often, in order to hold them in place, the ends of each of these frontal plaits were tied at the back of the head. This curving backwards over the temples was known in other parts of the Arab world since the time of Abbasids as *wawat al asdagh*, the letters of the temples.

An important part was played by the *rasha* hairstyle in Sudanese folk dancing, when it was swung in such a way as to hit the man approaching her gently in the face. This is the only element of touch between opposite sexes in folk dancing of this area except in the bride's dance. So when the *rasha* style went out of fashion, the hair plaited at the back had to be swung around. As a result, ladies with shorter hair began to add *jorse*, strands of black artificial silk thread, which they plaited into the ends or their back plaits to hang down in a rather unnatural straight manner as far as the buttocks. This style was innovated by the *khadims* but came to be so widely accepted that it became an important part of the traditional bridal regalia. Later on, the heavy black *jorse* became replaced by lighter black horse hair or nylon imitation called *sella*. In the 1950s the front pieces were sometimes loosened from behind the ears and allowed to hang freely forward over the cheeks and this style was called after the famous singer Ahmed Al Mustafa. This close to the skull *mushat* style affected the shape and style of the *tob* as it passed over the head and what it lacked in width compared with the *rasha* style was somewhat compensated for by the two sets of very large earrings called *fidayat* which were 3 to 4 inches in diameter. Starting with schoolgirls in about the 1950s and 60s, the *mushat* style gave way to all sorts of European styles in which the hair was freely combed and brushed, *meseraha* as they call it, and then styled. The traditional *mashata*, hairdresser, used to go from house to house taking two or three days over each client but her role now is taken over increasingly by the coiffeur in professional hairdressing salons[35].

Jewellery

Gold has since the earliest of times been a most important element of jewellery of this area as is indicated by the many examples to be found of the Meroitic period in the Sudan National Museum. Silver is not popular here as it is in eastern Sudan, and was mostly used for *hijul*, the heavy penannular anklets. Gold jewellery possessed by women had important social functions. It was considered an inviolable form of family savings because to attack and rob a woman was

very cowardly. For the unmarried girl it was an important status symbol of her father's ability to provide, and for the married woman of her husband's ability to maintain it and if possible to increase it. It was lent and borrowed between female members of a family on wedding occasions and often the bride would display the total gold resources of her mother and aunts. As a form of currency of guaranteed intrinsic value, the gold was always moving between goldsmiths and clients and in order to stimulate this movement the goldsmiths had a vested interest in inventing new styles so that customers would bring in their gold to be melted and beaten into the latest ones. As a result of this interchanging role of gold between cash and ornament there is hardly anything such as antique gold jewellery in the Sudan today. Traditionally, the Riverain woman had a high choker gold necklace called *matarig*, the same as that described for the Nubians. Then there was the *teela*, a necklace of cylindrical agate beads with gold sovereigns or half sovereigns or beaten gold imitation coins bearing images of British royalty like King George V. A more elaborate gold necklace, called *al shaffa*, display, was like a network of gold chains, gold sovereigns and half sovereigns covering the whole chest. This item was usually kept only for very ceremonial occasions. The traditional gold earrings called *fidayat* formed a very important part of her

A matarig necklace, a necklace joining shayir beads and a necklace with a sovereign piece surrounded by half sovereigns

appearance. However, around the 1960s all these items began to disappear and women had all their gold beaten into bracelets called *ghuwaishat* whose styles are constantly altering and having topical names such as *al asakir*, the soldiers, or *al balabil*, the nightingales, named after a famous singing group of three sisters. Until the 1960s, most women wore the *zumam* which was a small gold nose ring sometimes attached by brides to the earrings by a thin ornamental gold chain. In the 1940s and 50s this ring was sometimes replaced by a small gold stud in the shape of a flower bearing a small coloured stone.

Zumam nose ring

Fidayat earrings

Rings are still very commonly worn by women of all income groups. Country women and women who do a lot of manual work wear very simple rings, sometimes silver signets of indestructible shape, or a small gold coin. Fashionable ladies in towns and villages favour very large rings in which usually the stone is ornamental but valueless and the gold is the important component. These women do not have any interest in precious stones. But they did have a tradition of wearing semi-precious stones such as *soumit*, agate, amber and coral as part of the *jirtig* – the ritual regalia used in certain rites of passage ceremonies and in particular the bridal ceremony which will be dealt with in more detail later.

Tattooing and cosmetics

As noted by S. Hillelson[36] "women of the Sudan apply antimony to their gums and lower lips which are first pricked with needles... this is called *dag al laghab wa al shalufa*. This old custom amongst the Arabs is mentioned by such ancient poets as Tara ibn Al Abd and

Al Nabigha". This tattooing was applied to a new bride soon after the wedding ceremony was over, and was considered the true mark of a married woman. The bluish effect was much more remarkable in lighter skinned women and its cosmetic effect was supposed to be in making the teeth look whiter and more sparkling. This fashion began to disappear from around the 1960s. Some young unmarried women tattooed patterns on both forearms using a bundle of needles tied together. This they called *dag al halab*, gypsies' tattoo, and it seems to have had no other purpose than purely ornamental. As in the case of sailors, it arose as a pastime out of idleness, and possibly there is a masochistic element arising from the frustration of sex segregation in both cases. All this tattooing has now gone out of fashion. Antimony is used by married women for darkening the rims of the eyes as it is believed to be an effective protection against eye diseases. Again, this is a very old Nile Valley practice dating back to ancient Egyptian times. In addition, women plucked their eyebrows to attain a desirable fine curve and in the past used *kohl* to improve the line; nowadays an eyebrow pencil is used for this purpose. Various kinds of perfumed oils are applied to the face, arms, hands, legs and feet to obtain a shiny effect and keep the skin supple. A non-shiny skin is described as *aghbash*, ashy, and is considered neglected and dirty. Many women massage their bodies with an aromatic paste called *dilka* and this has a cleansing and softening effect. They also believe it to have an aphrodisiac effect. Occasionally they indulge themselves in a smoke bath called *dukhan*, wherein some logs of aromatic wood, from the *talh* or *shaf* tree, are burnt in a hole dug in the ground over which the woman sits covered in a thick brown blanket called *shamla*. Her pores are opened and cleansed by her sweating, and simultaneously her skin acquires a desirable golden yellow tint and a very powerful long-lasting aroma. This, like the application of *henna*, is one of those cosmetic practices which require a great deal of leisure time. Some women only practise it occasionally for the relief of rheumatic pains. Complete depilation of all superfluous body hair is practised by all married women of this area. However hairy a young girl may be, she is not allowed to take any action to address it until she is married. All these cosmetic practices were only permitted to women on reaching the married status. Divorcees and young widows who had completed their period of mourning were permitted some of these practices only very discretely. As a woman got older, usually on the birth of their first grandchild, she gradually gave up these cosmetic practices at the same time as she ceased to wear coloured *tobs* and if she continued the *dilka* or *dukhan* she alleged it was for medicinal purposes.

The bride of riverain Sudan

One of the most elaborate achievements of folk art in riverain Sudan is focused on the adornment of the *arousa*, the young bride. That the bride is a conscious theme of folk art can be seen by many representations of the *arousa* that appear in children's art and even in early examples of commercial art – on covers for sweet boxes and advertisements for cosmetics. The *arousa* became the symbol of feminine beauty and a bride's female relatives would participate in a group effort to produce the most fabulously beautiful bride. Some families confined the bride to one room for several months before the wedding and attempted to fatten her up with special food and starchy drinks such as *madida*, made of millet. Some of the girls of her age group would spend hours teaching her to dance, others would spend days making various unguents and perfumed oils with which to anoint her. A sister or intimate friend would depilate her with sugaring paste, *halawa*. The best hairdresser in the neighbourhood would be prevailed upon to prepare her hair, and finally gold and other traditional items of adornment would be assembled from amongst the family resources. Thus, a whole group of people participated with pride in this achievement and competition within the community, and at the wedding the girls of the bride's family would sing songs in her praise. Until about the 1940s it was the custom to have the bride dance in the *rahat* described earlier in this chapter with no other garment. The explanation for this is frequently given that the girl's family were proud of her nubile beauty and wanted to prove to the bridegroom's family that the bride was a virgin with an unblemished good figure and firm breasts. Possibly this custom was a safeguard against bride substitution as happened in the following story from Northern Province folklore.

The false bride

In the days when the people of Al Fireh had just begun to clothe the bride in a dress over the *rahat*, one family tried to cheat the bridegroom by fobbing him off with the younger sister. When the bride was being dressed for dancing, the women noticed that this young substitute had inadequately formed breasts to fill out the dress presented by the bridegroom, so the women fastened with a band of cloth, two coffee cups as 'falsies'. Unfortunately owing to the greasiness of the bride's well-oiled body, one of these cups fell during the very energetic posturing of the traditional bridal dance and smashed at the bridegroom's feet. He realised he had been cheated and was so humiliated he left the house immediately and the next morning sent the divorce papers around and quit the town for several years.

Groom at the jirtig ceremony seen in 2015. His jallabiya is made of tob al surrati. In the past the surrati was draped over the shoulders. The crescent, normally sown onto a red band tied around the head, is sown on to his tagiya. The huge, red, wooden vase contains scented powders. The groom is spraying perfume onto the guests at the jirtig ceremony and his fingertips and palms are dyed with black henna.

Bride dancing at the subheya in 1936, the traditional bridal dance consisting of a number of arous (bridal) songs accompanied by clapping, ululations and the beat of bongos. She wears a rahat skirt with a hagu belt. On her arm is a sin fil (ivory) bracelet. She is also wearing a cylindrical leather amulet. In her ears she is wearing two pairs of fidayat and a pair of mutgal. The golden pieces of her headdress are known as a tayara, from the word tiara.

In the 1960s brides were still wearing the tayara over the jadla, long strands of thread that hang down the back like hair. The rahat is worn under her dress. On her arm, she is wearing an ahfaz malak, a gold bracelet called 'guard your wealth'. Today, the rahat is worn over the dress or not at all.

Bride in tob al jirtig today. The red tob is offset with golden details and golden jewellery and shoes. The jiritig ceremony is performed by elder female relatives who bless the newlyweds using powdered scents and oils.

A bride of 13 years in Al Damer

Here is a description of a bride who was married at the age of 13 in 1936. Her name is Amina Mohamed Ahmed of the Rubatab, living in Al Damer where her widowed mother supported her family by baking and selling bread. She was married to a cousin from Mahmiya who is a *jallabi*, a petty merchant in Khartoum where they now have a small neighbourhood shop. For the ceremony of *gutt al rahat* this bride was led on to a beautiful coloured *birish*, rush mat, by a woman of the former slave class, covered in a *garmasis* and when this was removed this is how she appeared.

Her hair was very finely plaited in micro plaits very close to the scalp. At the centre of the back of the head some of these plaits were passed through a gold ring, and strands of black silk were plaited into this bunch and hung down her back as far as her buttocks. This tassel at the back was called *al jadla*. The rest of her hair reached her shoulders and the last 2 inches of each plait were teased out in the *rasha* style. The front of the hair which was parted in the middle, was covered on each side by a row of four gold coins called *rigan al sharif*. The rest of her head was covered by a cap of gold coins joined by black netted silk called the *mashabak*, or a *tagiya* cap or the *kafiyah*. For the occasion the required amount of gold, which in this case had been presented by the bridegroom, was taken to the goldsmith and beaten into imitation half sovereigns. From there it was taken to a special craftsman who fashioned it into a close-fitting network of coins. Later, one of the bride's attendants fixed it firmly by needle and black thread to the plaits of the bride's hair.

Each ear had three holes pierced in it, one in the lobe and two more holed above this, one inch apart. Two pairs of matching earrings called *fidayat* were hung in the upper holes and the third pair called *mutgal*, from *tageel* meaning heavy in Arabic because they contained gold, were hung in the lobes. They were large crescents of beaten gold usually beaten with a pattern of flowers or formalised birds. They contained several ounces of gold and in this case they were lent to the bride by her father's cousin. Passing from her right ear to a gold ring in the bride's right nostril, were three fine chains with little pieces of pear-shaped beads of gold hanging along the length of each chain – this was called *zumama abu rashma*. Worn tightly around the base of the throat this bride wore a *matarig* (choker) a four branches style called *al dagga um arba feru*. It was made of four parallel rows of cylindrical agates alternating with four long, barrel-shaped gold beads called *shayir*, barely. The choker was kept in shape by little bars of gold called *rakaiz* through which the parallel threads passed. This necklace

was the bride's own, having been presented by the bridegroom. The next necklace was much longer and hung down to the chest. It was called *al banadga* and was lent to the bride by her aunt Saida. It was made of cylindrical agates, interspersed with large gold imitation coins. The centre piece which hung down just over the heart was a very large gold coin called *farajalla*. Around the neck and hanging much lower to below the waist was a new leather amulet. It was hanging on double threads of red and was neatly made up of dark red tooled, leather of cylindrical shape and the ends were of decorative green leather.

The *rahat* in this case was a new one of plain leather not tanned in any special colour. Just lying over the top of it above the hips was a very important string of beads called *al hagu*, hip band. It was made of big red imitation coral beads called *al fum*, interspersed with large silver hollow balls which contained rattles called *al kamad al kas*. As the bride's hips were shaking in the traditional bridal dance, these silver balls rattled to the rhythm of the drum beat. The tradition of bells on ceremonial dress goes back centuries in this part of the Sudan[37].

Just above the elbow, the bride wore an ornamental cord of red silk with two blue beads on it and three long red tassels dangling down. On the wrists was a similar arrangement made of agates and red beads and finished off with a red tassel called *al giyafa*. Such bands of silk were also attached to the bridegroom's wrists during the wedding ceremony. Above the *giyafa* this bride wore three slim gold *ghuwaishat*, bracelets, on the right wrist, a gift from her mother. On her left wrist, she wore an old-fashioned ivory bracelet.

Around the ankles this bride wore anklets of a very old traditional design – they look very heavy but were in fact made of hollow beaten silver. The soles of her feet and ends of her toes were decorated with *henna* which, after three subsequent applications of two hours' duration of *henna* paste, was quite black in colour. The same was applied to the palms of her hands and fingertips which would be much displayed as they are stretched outward and backward in the bridal dance. At all times during this display the bride was supposed to keep her eyes closed and her expression solemn while surrounded by music, singing and praises and comments on her appearance. As she performed the traditional bridal dance, which is a highly rhythmic display of breast and bottom, all her jewellery and ornamentation was displayed to its best advantage.

The Sudanese Tob

The *tob* of the Sudanese women has such social and psychological significance as to necessitate a whole study of its own. It is by far the most essential garment worn by local women, and as it is the most visible of them it is the subject of most comment and interest. Despite its unchanging simplicity, female ingenuity has produced many variations over the last half century. The word *tob*, or *thawb*, in Arabic is the generic term for clothing but, in the case of Sudanese women, it means an outer, seamless garment, 4 to 4.5 metres in length by 2 metres in width, of bright or pastel coloured, initially of cotton material. For every woman, the *tob* is a statement of social status: it distinguishes the married woman from the unmarried, different qualities of *tob* indicate wealth and sophistication, and finally, amongst the diaspora of Sudanese, the Sudanese woman wears her *tob* with pride as a visible sign of national identity. It is also the most enduring and lasting item of Sudanese women's national costume. The *rahat* has gone and the *gurgab* too, but the *tob* has survived because of its overall usefulness, its beauty and its adaptability. For a rural woman, her *tob* can be her overcoat, her mosquito net, the pouch for gathering cotton or other crops, her nightdress, or the curtain behind which she can breast-feed her baby in public places. It was made of cotton and the commonest was the plain off-white *farda* type with simple blue or black borders.

Origins of the Sudanese tob

This traditional costume of northern Sudanese women is quite unlike that of Egypt in spite of the strong cultural influences of this powerful neighbour in many other aspects. It is unlike anything else in the Middle East, nor does it reflect anything from the Hijaz, which in other ways has so often exerted strong cultural influences mainly through the vehicle of Islam. However, women in some areas of Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Western Sahara, wear a seamless garment similar to the Sudanese woman's *tob*. It is difficult to account for these similarities in such scattered areas unless we consider the possible ancestry of these *tobs* in the *toga* of Roman matrons in the North African territories of the Roman Empire such as Carthage and Cyrenaica. The women's *tob* of northern Sudan is not recognisable in the descriptions of travellers' accounts of the 18th and 19th century such as Krump and Burckhardt. Most of these Europeans travelled in caravans and some disguised themselves as traders and were thus well aware of and documented the various items of women's attire involved in the trade.

During the Khedivial, or Turkiya, rule at the beginning of the 19th century, indigo was introduced into the Sudan and grown in the Dongola region. The Turkiya government had a monopoly on the manufacture of indigo and compelled the peasants to grow it. It was difficult to grow and water-thirsty, and could at that time only be irrigated by the *sagiya* or *shadoof* water wheel. The practice caused riots and protests when the Khedive Mohamed Tewfik visited Dongola. From then on indigo became less commonly grown and was later replaced by chemical dyes. But the blue-dyed *tob* called *zarag* came into being as a result, and remained until the 1960s the cheapest, most practical and commonest *tob* for Sudanese women. It was worn by peasants of the riverain area until recently while one indigo dye workshop in Omdurman was, until the late 1970s, still producing the *tob zarag* mainly for western Sudan.

The Mahdi reform movement in the 19th century banned all 'Turkish' fashions and forced every woman to cover her face in public with a veil. Before this, only the Rashaida tribeswomen wore the special, heavily decorated veil, the *ginaa*, as they still do today. Not having a *ginaa*, the Mahdiya women covered their faces with their *tobs* by drawing the *jedaa* – the end of the *tob* usually thrown over the shoulder – tightly across their lower faces and tucking it in at the cheek with the remaining yard or so hanging over their heads. The fact that the wearing of this garment was enforced by decree during the Mahdiya implies that it was not worn by everyone until that time, and indeed in its present form is not recognisable amongst the descriptions of earlier travellers. The usefulness of the *tob* required by the Mahdiya, puritan reformists, is due to its ability to cover up the woman entirely and disguise both the woman's identity and her body's outline. The style of using the *tob* to veil the face, the *bullama*, remained the correct outdoor style for adult Sudanese women until the 1950s when the first girls to enter the university in Khartoum uncovered their faces, and two women were elected to parliament who didn't wear it in that style. They were quickly copied by the Girls Training College's students, and soon all the teachers and the townswomen had abandoned the *bullama* except in the case of toothache or a dust storm. In the 1950s most women had only two *tobs* – the *zarag* for everyday wear and agricultural work and the *abyad*, white *tob*, for ceremonial visits to funerals, *bika* or weddings, *farah*. By the 1950s, many bourgeois women were wearing voile *tobs* imported from Manchester in the palest pastel colours; the best of these had little woven tufts called *abu gijeja*, which is still highly regarded today. At first these imported *tobs* were not wide enough and so 9 metres had to be divided into two lengths of 4.5 metres each and these were skilfully joined along one central seam with crochet stitches and the end which

hung over the left shoulder, the *jedaa*, was decorated with a deeper band of crochet thus giving it more weight to stay in position. At the same time, their rural sisters began to join the two lengths of their indigo *tobs* with white embroidery thus creating a striking effect.
Following the economic crisis of 1958 when the Gezira cotton crop was undersold on the world market by the Russians, imported *tobs* became rare and so hand-dyed and handwoven *fardas* from Shendi became the fashion. These were usually in a plain colour with multi-coloured borders. The fashion-starved women decorated the whole length of the lateral borders with little silk tassels, *fulla*, of the same colours. Again, during a later economic '*tob* drought', materials were being sent home by the first Sudanese economic emigrants to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, the *mughtarbeen*, but often this cloth was not the right width and the extra bit, about 20 centimetres wide, was cut off and sewn on another humble 'home-grown' *tob* called the patched one, *al muragaa*.

Wearing the tob

Until about the 1950s, the *tob* was exclusively a married woman's garment. On the occasion of the *gutt al rahat* ceremony the bride would abandon the *rahat* forever and wear the *tob*. With the advent of girls' education, unmarried girls wore the *tob* to school; inside the school premises the *tob* was folded up and put aside and the *tarha*, headscarf, was worn. This fashion spread to girls of urban families who did not go to school and as soon as girls' breasts were formed they took to wearing the *tob* in which they felt 'grown up'. The women of the riverain area put the *tob* on like this: first one corner is pulled over the left shoulder then the rest is wrapped around the back under the right armpit then across to the left shoulder and up over the head then thrown across the breast with the end hanging over the left shoulder. To achieve the *bullama*, face mask, in order to cover their faces in the presence of strange men, women used to pull their last piece over across the mouth and then tuck it in firmly and flick the rest of the *tob* over the top of the head to hold it in place. Country women tend to pull more cloth over their shoulder and hitch up the *tob* higher so as to free their legs when walking or working in the fields. Women picking cotton or *bamiya*, okra, tighten the *tob* around their waist and bring out the end piece to act as an *ib*, meaning pouch like a large apron into which they gather their pickings. Women who are wailing at a funeral uncover their heads and wind their *tobs* tightly under their armpits thus freeing their arms for

gesticulating in the air. Women who are invited to dance at weddings also uncover their hair and puff out the last fold of their *tob* across their breast and spread it down low over their hands which they hold backward like wings and their swaying heads give the dove-courtship-effect whereby this dance has become known as the 'dove dance'. Although the *tob* is supposed to disguise the female body, it is a very feminine garment and women have various coquettish ways of using it to display their charms. One way is to draw the first wrap of the *tob* rather tightly below the buttocks so that when they walk their hips and buttocks are rather emphasised. Another way is to swing the left hand outward and backward so that the hanging part of the *tob* over the left shoulder is made to swing exaggeratedly. Also, when in conversation with members of the opposite sex, women are supposed to make sure that the *tob* is modestly arranged, and so there is a lot of nervous and coy twitching over the head and around the sides of the face with the hands.

The process of putting on the Sudanese tob

The roughest kind of *tob* is called *ganja*. It is worn by widows or women in very deep mourning, and is made of very coarse handwoven and handspun unbleached cotton. In the Dongola area it is woven on such narrow looms, that four lengths have to be sewn together to make the *tob;* this is considered now to be an expression of the very deepest mourning. The idea of this ritual mourning is to deliberately court ugliness and negligence. Some women even go as far as to dye this *tob* in tea to make it a dirty brown colour. At a later stage in mourning, widows and other bereaved women wear a very plain thick white *tob* of an off-white mercerised material called *wazni ashara* or a whiter one called *sakobez*. Many widows for the rest of their lives wear a very plain *tob* imported from India called *bengali* or a locally spun *farda* of white with maybe a black *zig* type of border.

Occupation varieties

Rural women engaged in farming and milk selling have for ages worn a cheap durable *tob* dyed in indigo called *tob zarag* or *tob riyada*[1]. These were often locally woven and locally dyed, but nowadays they are mostly of cheap imported Indian cloth and dyed in one of two workshops in the industrial area of Omdurman. Until around the 1950s all women of this area wore this *tob zarag* for any day to day occupation around the house, when going to the well or dropping in on the neighbours. Later, women in towns and villages gradually replaced this *tob zarag* by *krib aswad*, a black voile, and *fardas* woven of black or brown became common. Again later in the 1960s and early 1970s, this in its turn was replaced in fashion by very cheap coloured and patterned *tobs* imported from India – which they promptly called *tob jeran*, neighbours, a very interesting appellation that tells us exactly what this *tob* is considered useful for: visiting the neighbours. This *tob* occupies a place half-way between the roughest black *tob* used for dirty work and the best white fine quality *tob* used for formal outings.

Midwives, nurses and teachers were the first Sudanese women to engage in professional occupations outside the home. Midwives and nurses have a formal uniform of white cotton dress and white *tob* of plain material – *sakobez* or *bengali* and white shoes. School mistresses are not subject to uniform restrictions as are nurses and midwives, but they have always retained the white *tob* as being the respectable garment for work. Later this same 'voluntary uniform' was adopted by female university students and other working women in the Civil Service or private companies. White is considered Sunna, the colour which, as tradition has it, was preferred by the Prophet Mohamed.

However, the restriction to one colour did not prevent these young ladies who were increasingly coming out into the public eye from seeking for variety and the chance to express their individualism. Great ingenuity was used on the part of customers and tradesmen to produce as often as possible new varieties of woven or machine-embroidered or hyphenate effects of white on white. In addition to attaining this colour restriction, it was also necessary for the material produced for these *tobs* to have exactly the right degree of transparency and of flexibility to be worn correctly and not to slip from the head. Too thickly woven would be rejected by the women as *tageel*, heavy, and therefore also not airy enough, therefore too hot. At the other extreme, such a white *tob* chosen for formal occasions must not be so transparent *khafif*, light as to be too exposing and therefore *aib*, shameful. When miniskirts

A transparent tob mufastan, with miniskirt and high wig, fashionable in the 1960s and 70s

came into fashion in the late 1960s in fact many adventurous a young lady tended to wear much lighter *tobs* on purpose so she could be seen to be wearing the latest fashion.

Up until about 1952 the two pieces, 4.5 metres in length, of the *tob* were often joined along their length by fine crochet or at least an openwork embroidery stitch, and the end that hung over the shoulder had a decorative band of crochet helping to weigh it down. Some plain white voile *tobs* had beautifully embroidered *mansaj*, cross-stitch and counted threads motifs. In 1952, the war in Korea caused a boom in cotton prices and the Sudan had a sudden burst of prosperity. Many women, particularly in the Gezira Cotton Scheme, acquired more *tobs* and for a while it became fashionable to wear the *tob* hastily joined by machine and with the ends quite unsewn. A woman would say that her *tob* was so new and she was in such haste to wear it that she did not have the time to sew it properly. The *tob* would remain like this even after being washed several times. This fashion did not last very long and the next trend was to have the seam sewn by the newly invented 'Slant-O-Matic' Singer machine which swung the needle in a zigzag fashion. If a woman did not have access privately to such a machine she would pay to have it sewn by one of the tailors in the *suq*, the marketplace.

In the 1960s, machine-embroidered *tobs* began to be imported from Switzerland. These were called *abu kanar*, the bordered one, or *tob mufastan*, serrated. These two *tobs* were of very fine quality voile embroidered with fine silk threads in dainty motifs all over and with decorative pierced and serrated borders. These were always woven in one *fitga*, one piece, and had no join in the middle. One of the first of these to be nicknamed was called *bolees al najda* after the new blue police cars with flashing red lights.

In more recent times, cloth suitable for *tobs* but not woven in the appropriate width has been brought in as an individual present in large numbers from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. Two lengths of this cloth joined together proved too wide and the wide surplus strip was often added to a cheaper white *tob*, setting a new fashion called *al muragaa*, the patched.

Until twenty to thirty years predating this study, a woman's best *tob* was usually a fine white voile of the Tootal trademark of the best quality. Then gradually very pale pastel colours of the same material began to be worn. A woman wearing a very brightly coloured *tob* was considered to be vulgar or to be from a tribal area outside the riverain area. However, over the last decades all this has changed and coloured *tobs* of every colour and combination of colours are worn although the occasions on which they can be worn are restricted albeit less so than formerly.

The *tob zifaf* is a special kind of white *tob* decorated with shiny metallic embroidery or sequins in which the bride is dressed on the first day of the wedding. Sometimes she simply wears it over a white wedding dress when the ceremony is in the modernised *kusha* style. Alternatively, when the wedding ceremonies follow the traditional pattern, the bride may be wrapped in the *tob zifaf* on the occasion of *gutt al rahat* either instead of the *garmasis* or draped over it. The *tob malawan*, coloured, is not supposed to be worn for work. In fact, there has been recently an attempt at forbidding its appearance in offices. Social pressures and social control are usually enough to restrict the wearing of coloured and fancy *tobs* to the appropriate occasions. Such occasions are weddings and other celebrations – receptions and invitations to the cinema and theatre or other evening entertainments. The varieties of materials and types of these *tobs* have become innumerable but some of their names and descriptions deserve a special mention.

The naming of tobs

Every new kind of *tob* acquired a name that reflected the political and social topics of the period. Very often, the newly named *tob* was mentioned in the latest popular love song or in the traditional bride-praising songs at weddings. So *tob* names became part of the Sudanese folklore. This naming of *tobs* by popular topic became for a short while in the 1950s and 1960s deliberately exploited commercially. The Syrian merchant who was at the time the agent of Tootal voile in Khartoum approached some prominent and influential Sudanese women teachers about the topical trends in *tob* names and asked them to suggest names for new *tobs*. These names were then sent to Tootal in Manchester, and labels with the new names in English and Arabic were printed on the packaging of the latest products. A few of this newest style *tobs* were dispatched by air to these privileged informants, who were given the chance to purchase and wear them before the bulk of the new *tobs* reached the market. Sudanese women, as in most societies, tend to be more conservative than men and yet, paradoxically, also remain interested and aware of changing fashions. The apparently unchanging persistence of the *tob* is only superficial, for fundamental changes have taken place in both the garments and the hairstyles worn beneath them. The spread of girls' education, the mass media, and Sudanese women travelling increasingly to Europe and the USA have broadened their awareness of, and access to, wider choices and varieties of fabrics. With

Khartoum being the cultural centre for the country's elite, it is logical that the metropolitan women influenced the names of new *tob* fashions, such as *rimush awlad burri* – Burri boys' eyelashes, and *dulaa al dakatra* – doctors' ribs.

The following collection illustrates the sort of names which have been given to women's *tobs* over the last century. Some of the names are purely fanciful, some are descriptive in a metaphorical way, and others still are names which reflect the topics of the day. It is interesting to note that these topical names often represent sort of amusing and daring statements by the women of their awareness of the men's world from which they are excluded. The names are given in a transliteration of the Arabic with a translation or short gloss in brief note form, and occasionally there is a line or two of doggerel made to rhyme with the name of the *tob* that have been translated into English. Presented here according to their approximate date, the names of *tobs* continue to mark important social, political and economic eras and events both in the Sudan and abroad. The names also reflect the typical Sudanese trait of poking fun at authority and latest popular crazes. Thus, a glimpse of Sudan's history can be caught through *tob* fashion.

Common tob materials and designs

Farda – *The word literally means 'one piece'. This group of tobs is made from handspun and woven cotton, usually in white with a blue border. These were the first tobs to be worn as they are known today and were used by teachers, midwives and older women.*

Damouriya – *White or off-white to beige cotton that is coarser than the farda. It was typically used for mourning and often of very coarse, handspun and woven material. The zarag 'blueness', worn for work and by lower classes of workers and servants was of sakobez material of two types; one heavy and one light, dyed dark indigo and blue.*

Bengali – *Cheap white Indian muslin of pure cotton with coloured lines, usually blue, on the horizontal edges worn after the time of fardas and damouriya by midwives and teachers.*

Firka – *This traditional material comes in two types: the silky red and gold material used in wedding and circumcision ceremonies called the garmasis, and um safiha, a silk and wool combination of rectangular shapes with black, white and dark purple colours. The garmasis was originally of silk but is now made of mixed fabrics. Um safiha was used as a cover and also as a gurgab, loincloth.*

Hazaz *– 'Shaky' – this light, cheap rayon material creases easily and tends to shrink in the wash but is cool in the heat. It is also used to make women's jallabiyas.*

Jeran *– 'Neighbours' – cheap, colourful Indian voile used for visiting the neighbours. This type of tob is today manufactured by an Emirati factory in Khartoum Bahri.*

Krib *– Made of 'crepe' material, this is similar to and sometimes used to replace the surrati. This soft cotton material is plain white in colour and may sometimes be joined by crochet. Other silk variations are the crêpe de soie and crêpe de chine. Crêpe démon – 'crepe of the devil' was a heavy crepe tob that 'changed' its colour in different lighting.*

Chiffon *– Light-weight cotton material used for evening tobs. The silk, coloured version of this material, is called Georgette.*

Lame *– Name given to shiny tobs fashionable today and worn for special occasions. They can be made of voile or chiffon interwoven with metallic plain or patterned fibres.*

Madghut *– 'The pressed' – designs are pressed or ironed into the material leaving shiny motifs, popular in the 70s but still around today.*

Muragaa *– 'The patched one' – tob material from the Gulf was too long so the extra length was sewn onto another tob. Sometimes this patching is done deliberately as a fashion statement.*

Sakobez *– Pure, untreated, thin cotton. This light material is used for men's arragis, the undergarment worn under the jallabiya, and as tobs by aged women and widows.*

Surrati *– Cotton but sometimes expensive silk off-white in colour. In eastern Sudan, it is the generic name for the women's coloured tob usually with a yellow silky border. The surrati is also a much sought-after silk tob with a red border – sometimes white or off-white – used for ritual and ceremonial occasions and often the subject of folk poetry. "Oh! My fine surrati; You bring tears of joy; When I die, I must not be buried without you".*

Saksaka *– From the name seersucker, a type of ruffled cotton.*

Shak *– A modern fashion for heavily beaded and sequined tobs which are worn for special occasions.*

Al taga al mugasama *– 'The divided lengths' – two lengths of material joined by crochet.*

Tiliswa *– A corruption of 'tulle de soie' – a plain, off-white, silky and shiny soft tob. Later versions were coloured and people added embroidery to the design.*

Total *– This refers to voile material originally manufactured at the Tootal factory in Manchester. It is the preferred material for tobs with about a third of all garments consisting of this material. The pure cotton does not slip off the head and is not too heavy or too light-weight.*

Tul *– Tulle fabric of various designs including tul al souban – 'Snake tulle' with curvy lines resembling snakes, and tul mutaraz – 'Embroidered tulle'.*

1900 till the 1950s

The 1900s–1950s saw a gradual acceptance of women's participation in the public sphere prompted by an expansion of girls' and women's education from 1930s onwards. Women's unions, movements and associations also started to be created. Independence in 1956 was preceded by a heightened sense of nationalism and an optimistic outlook for Sudan's future.

A woman wrapped in a firka um safiha asleep on a traditional rope strung angareb bed made of wood

1900

Galam al busta – 'Post office pen', as pens were supplied for public use in the post office, a novelty around 1915.

Dula al dakatra – 'Doctors' ribs', a white farda with wide gaps fashionable in the late 1920s, named on the occasion of the first graduates of the Kitchener School of medicine who became a prestigious group.

1920

Sirsifil – Named after a British colonial administrator, Sir Sarsfield-Hall, Governor of Khartoum from 1929–36.

Dimu al tijar – 'Merchants' tears', a firka produced during an economic crisis in the 30s.

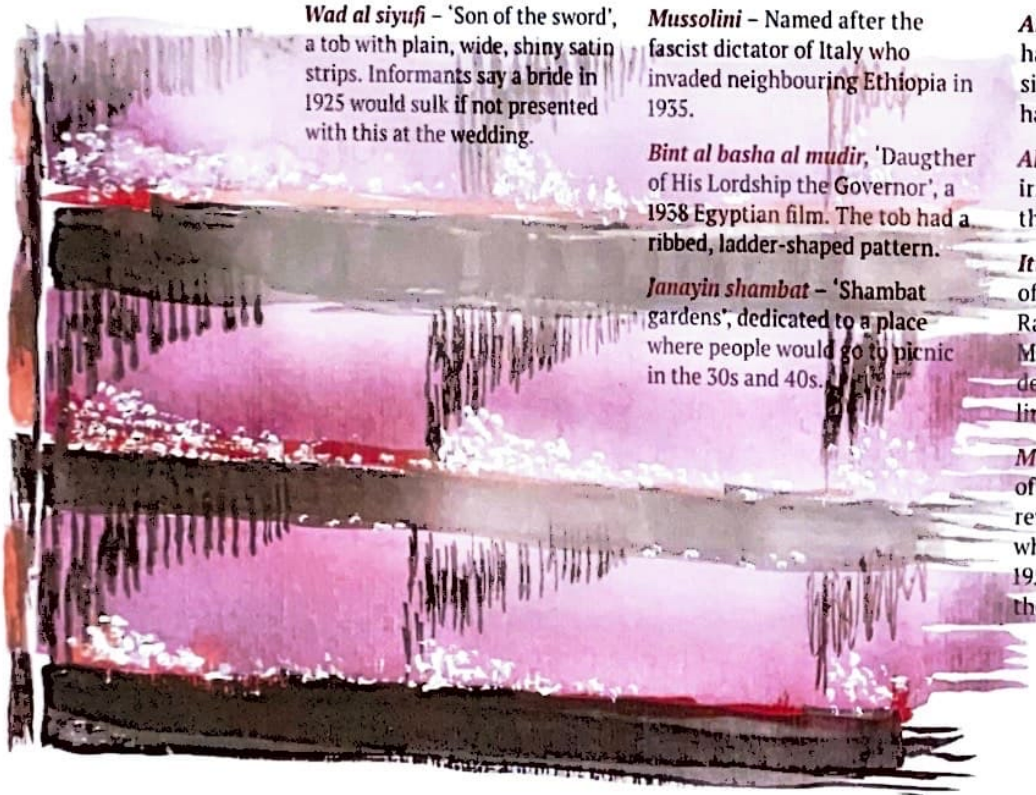
Rimush awlad burri – 'Burri boys eyelashes', named after a famous group of singers from the Burri neighbourhood of Khartoum in the 1930s.

1940

Al sharika – 'The company', named to mark the setting up of companies after independence.

Al tanmiyah – 'Development', celebrating adult education was a type of farda in the late 40s.

Dula abla – 'Abla's ribs', from an Egyptian film 'Antar and Abla' popular in the early 1940s.



Wad al siyufi – 'Son of the sword', a tob with plain, wide, shiny satin strips. Informants say a bride in 1925 would sulk if not presented with this at the wedding.

Mussolini – Named after the fascist dictator of Italy who invaded neighbouring Ethiopia in 1935.

Bint al basha al mudir, 'Daugther of His Lordship the Governor', a 1938 Egyptian film. The tob had a ribbed, ladder-shaped pattern.

Janayin shambat – 'Shambat gardens', dedicated to a place where people would go to picnic in the 30s and 40s.

Ahmad al mustafa – After the handsome and popular Sudanese singer of the 1940s who also had a hairstyle named after him.

Al moya fil haydan – 'Water in the irrigation channels' was a tob in the early 1950s.

Ittifa[illegible] sayidayn – 'Agreement of the two Sayids', meaning Abdul Rahman Al Mahdi and Ali Al Mirghani in 1952. This is a ribbed design with straight intersecting lines.

Mohamed najib – A cotton tob of any colour. Named after the revolutionary president of Egypt who visited the Sudan in March 1954 when the Umma Party won the elections.

Dulaa al dakatra, a lightweight open-weave, farda in the 1920s

The 1960s and 70s

Khartoum of the 1960s was a place where upper class women had their clothes made by foreign tailors from fabrics imported from Europe and London. This was a time when open-air cinemas showed the latest films and where a tramway connected Khartoum and Omdurman, in a cosmopolitan city that attracted foreigners to settle and open businesses.

Naoma – This tob of very light hazaz material which was popular around 1955 was named after a loved one in a popular song of longing, who has married and left the area, travelling away on a train. "Oh Naoma! How I miss those who used to visit us".

Azhari fi bandung – Ismail Al Azhari, Sudan's first prime minister after independence, at the Non-Alignment Summit in Bandung in 1955.

Nehru – On the occasion of the visit by the Indian Prime Minister in 1957.

Al wisadah al khaliyah – 'The Empty Pillow', named after a 1957 Egyptian film starring the famous Egyptian singer and actor Abdul Halim Hafiz.

Al qamar al rusi – 'The Russian satellite', on its launch in 1957. This was a chiffon tob with metallic threads running through it horizontally with shiny flower design.

Lahalibu – 'Flames', a coloured tob of the 50s–60s covered in large acrylic squares. It is said the smell of paint remained on the tob for a long time. A rhyme matches the name in Arabic "Lahalibu – law gadir jibu, law ma gadir sibu", "Whoever can get it, so – Who cannot, let it go".

Al mazahir – 'Showing off', an expensive tob from the 50s and 60s with irregular, fish scale-like design similar to iyun zarug but smaller shapes.

Al safir – 'The Ambassador', a highly prestigious group, since it was the first time the Sudan had ambassadors. This 1960s design had three horizontal bands at both the top and bottom of the tob with a dainty flower pattern embroidered in the body.

Mabud al jamahir – 'Worshipped by the public', a coloured 60s silk tob with embroidered flowers and a bead in the middle of the flower.

1960

Azhari fil matar – 'Isamil Al Azhari at the airport'. Tootal white voile with a tuft in the middle of a small square; the tuft represented Azhari with the square being the red carpet of honour.

Al istiqlal – 'Independence', a tob with square patterns in 1956.

Al silk al diplomacy – 'Diplomatic corps', appeared just after the first foreign embassies opened in Khartoum following independence in 1956.

Jamal abdul nasir – After the Egyptian leader in the late 1950s – similar to al dala, of light material with wide horizontal bands.

Iyun zarug – 'Eyes of (Mubarak) Zarug', a Sudanese politician in the 1950s renowned for his good looks and remarkable large eyes. This tob was covered in embroidered, interlinked irregular shapes like fish scales.

1970

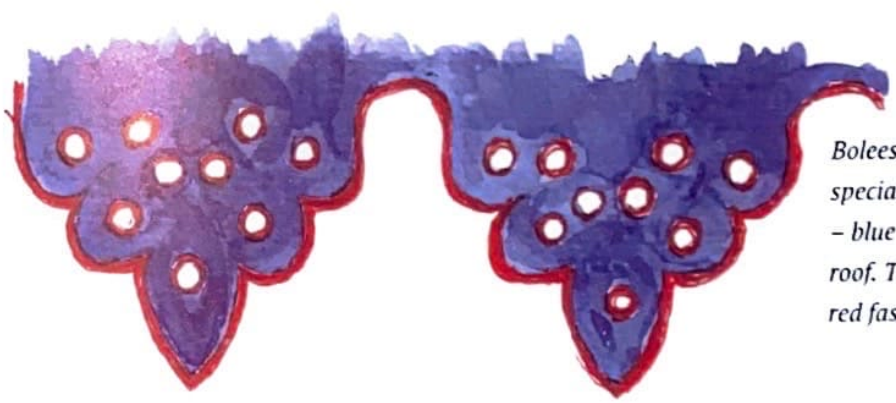
Sheikan – A coloured tob popular in the 50s and 60s marking the anniversary of the battle at Sheikan, in Kordofan, in which Hicks Pasha was defeated by the Mahdists.

Al sawdanah – 'Sudanisation', a tob of the 1960s, following independence. This was a plain nylon tob with a delicate flower design embroidered all over.

Al matafi – 'The fire brigade', a red 60s tob with black motifs representing firemen's hats.

Al rimish – 'The eyelash', named after the 1960s ophthalmologist Al Baghir Ibrahim, was of a light transparent material with vertical lines linked by smaller horizontal lines. "Al rimish whoever sees it will not blink – because they are captivated by its beauty".

Khartoum bil layl – 'Khartoum by night', a black, glittery tob from the 60s with small perforations, inspired by Khartoum and its lights as they can be seen from a plane.



Bolees al najda – 'Speed cops', special fast radio police cars in 1968 – blue with flashing red lights on the roof. The tob was bright blue with a red fastun and kanar border.

and 70s

a place where upper class women
reign tailors from fabrics imported
was a time when open-air cinemas
ere a tramway connected Khartoum
an city that attracted foreigners to

Tob risalat london,
'Message from London'

1980s – Today

The 1970s was a time when increasing personal freedoms meant people started to wear the colours they wanted and the pattern of migration to the capital from rural areas picked up. However, by the early 80s, the State's Islamic leanings began to influence dress and conservative clothing started to be imposed and later adopted.

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Mabud al jamahir – 'Worshipped by the public', a coloured 60s silk tob with embroidered flowers and a bead in the middle of the flower.

Iyun katkut – 'Chicks eyes', a 1960s design of small circles with dots in the middle on voile material.

Lumumba – named after Patrice Lumumba, the Congolese independence leader assassinated in 1961.

Hadhihi laylati – 'This is my night', named after a song by the Egyptian legend Um Kulthum on the occasion of her visit to the Sudan in 1968. This was a shiny, silk tob with an embroidered flower pattern.

Usbu al mara – 'Women's week' has alternating black and white tufts on a plain background. It was named after an annual festival organised by the Women's Union before 1969.

Harb al khalij – 'The Gulf War', at the event of the 1980s Iran-Iraq war.

Al amir – 'The Prince', a plain, pure nylon see-through tob with circle and dot motifs named on the occasion of the visit to the Sudan of Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia in the 80s.

Al amira diana – 'Princess Diana', named after the new member of the British family in the early 1980s.

Al tayr al muhajir – 'Migrating birds' – after a poem by Salah Ahmad Ibrahim sung by the late Sudanese singer Mohamed Wardi.

Kamil al awsaf – 'The perfect one', a song by veteran Sudanese singer Mohamed Al Amin.

Salim al zog – 'Good taste', named after a song by the late Sudanese singer Mohamed Wardi. This tob had two parallel lines in a wave pattern across the bottom with silk tufts in the crest of each wave.

1970

Al rimish – 'The eyelash', named after the 1960s ophthalmologist Al Baghir Ibrahim, was of a light transparent material with vertical lines linked by smaller horizontal lines. "Al rimish whoever sees it will not blink – because they are captivated by its beauty".

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Speed cops',
olice cars in 1968
g red lights on the
right blue with a
ar border.

1980

Al thawrah – 'The Revolution', marking the popular uprising which toppled the regime of Ibrahim Aboud in 1964. On any colour background, this tob consisted of a series of horizontal lines with rows of tufts in between.

Sawt al musiqa – 'The Sound of Music', named after the 1965 film and Broadway musical. It was red with musical notes embroidered in white along the bottom border.

Al kadir – From 'cadre', the new employment grades created by Minister of Finance Sharif Al Hindi in 1967. The saying went that women would threaten their menfolk with filing for divorce if they didn't get tob al kadir.

Sahran al layl – 'Up all night', a style of the late 60s made of transparent nylon.

Al sad al ali – named after the High (Aswan) Dam opened in 1970.

Sham al nasim – 'Smelling the breeze' – named after Nawruz, an annual spring holiday in the Middle East that falls on the Coptic Easter. This tob in the 1970s had a white background with coloured, embroidered circles.

Al dala – 'Indulgence', a tob of the 70s of light material in one colour with shiny, wide horizontal bands in the same colour. A later version of this tob is sikat al salama, 'Safe travels'.

1990

Al intifadah – The 1985 popular uprising against President Nimeiri.

Suwar al dahab – Named after the head of the interim government following the overthrow of Nimeiri in 1985.

Aalam al nujum – 'World of stars', a Sudan TV talk-show in the early 80s where famous singers were interviewed.

Saddam fi al khafji – named after the surprise attack and occupation of the Saudi city of Al Khafji by Saddam Hussein's troops in 1991.

Sayf al ubur – 'The summer of the crossing', the name of a Sudan Armed Forces military operation in South Sudan in 1992.

Awdat nimeiri – 'Nimeiri's return' from exile in 2000. This was a very colourful hazaz material tob.

Asifat al sahra – 'Desert Storm' or the second Gulf War in the 2000s.

George girdahi – Named after the Lebanese presenter of the Arabic version of the TV programme 'Who wants to be a Millionaire?' popular in the early 2000s. A plain, soft tob with small perforations and embroidery.

Al sahhaf – Name of the spokesman for Saddam Hussein's regime during the allied invasion of 2003. He was infamous for his propagandist rhetoric.

Asalah – On the occasion of the visit to Khartoum in 2003 by the Syrian singer and star Assala Nasri.

Naivasha – The Kenyan town where the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of South Sudan was signed in 2005.

Zahrat al rabi – 'Daisy', a 2006 Korean film.

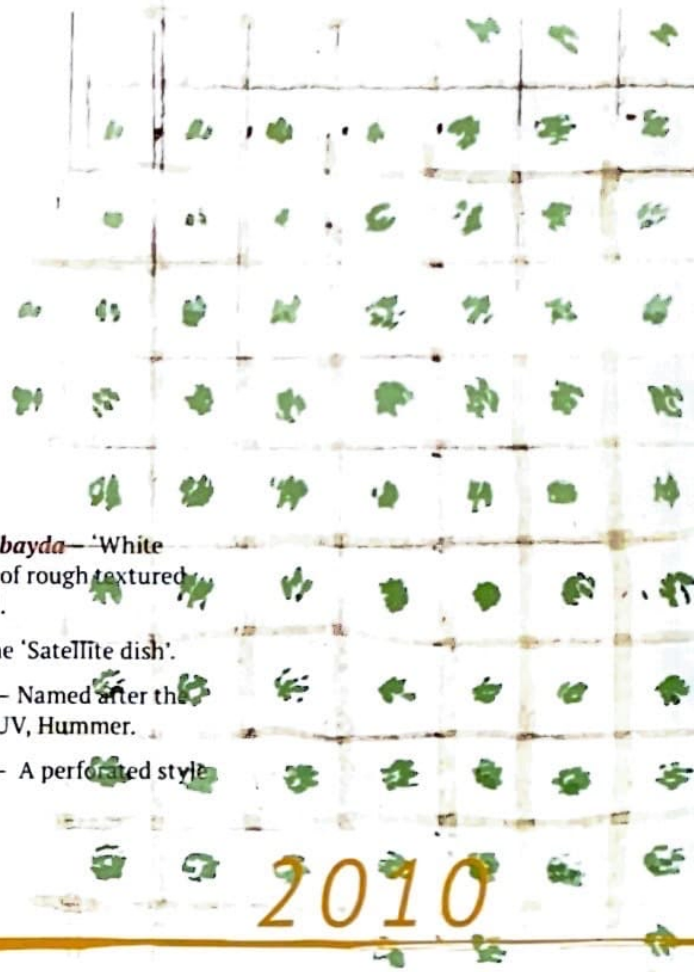
Iyun oshin – 'Oshin's eyes', named after the Japanese soap opera, Oshin, broadcast in the Sudan in 2008.

Malikat janse – 'The Queen of Jhansi', a popular Indian soap opera broadcast to Sudanese viewers in 2014.

Al wathba – 'The leap', named after a speech in 2014 by President Al Bashir famed for how often the word was used in relation to predicted growth on all fronts.

Al tahalul – 'Reliniquish', a recent phrase from 2015 used to describe the act of officials voluntarily giving back embezzled public funds and in exchange evaded persecution.

Abu al gunfud – 'Hedgehog', named after a craze in 2016 to acquire hedgehogs after it was rumoured that the small mammal had healing qualities. This tob is covered in tiny circles of material each attached at one end to the tob creating an uneven, hedgehog-like effect.



Al ramla al bayda – 'White sand', a tob of rough textured background.

Al dish – The 'Satellite dish'.

Al hummer – Named after the American SUV, Hummer.

Al internet – A perforated style of tob.

2000

Ocampo – named after the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court who issued an arrest warrant against Sudan's president in 2008.

Al sad – 'The dam' marked the inauguration in 2009 of Marawi Dam in northern Sudan.

Burj al fatih – Named after the Libyan-funded, egg-shaped, 5-star hotel on the confluence of the Nile in Khartoum, which opened in 2009.

Tiger – Chiffon with shiny sihan, bands in tiger print, fashionable today.

Sukar-sukar – 'Sugary', a recent light tob of sparkly material.

Layali dubai – 'Dubai nights', a patterned chiffon with metallic stripes running through horizontally.

2010

Al layzar – 'The laser', a recent fashion with two horizontal colours that fade into each other.

Al marseedis – Mercedes car brand.

Al shabah – 'Ghost', named after the F35 stealth fighter jet.

Discovery – Named after one of the Land Rover models.

Al quwat al musalaha – 'The Armed Forces', a heavy tob with horizontal lines and also the name of a style of gold bracelet.

Al daam al sari – 'Rapid response', a government sanctioned military force active in Darfur. This tob has a plain background with embroidery patterns resembling the force's logo, at the ends of the tob.

Al budrah – 'Powder', a recent style of plain but sometimes patterned tob made of a mix of satin and cotton similar to the hazaz.

When tobs of sufficient width of 1.4 metres were not available to early Sudanese expats in Saudi Arabia, one was 'cannibalised' to patch another to make it the correct width. The remaining piece of the cut tob was swapped with sisters, friends and neighbours making for further tob muragaas

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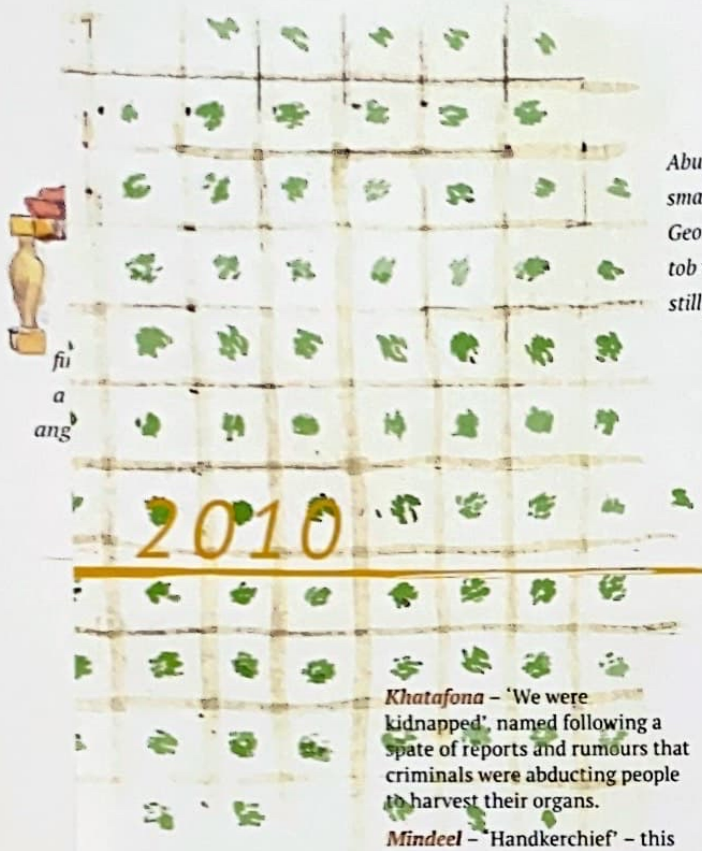

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Abu gijeja – 'Tufted one' – any colour with small tufts, popular since the 40s and 50s. Geometric and floral prints versions of this tob were popular in the 80s. Abu gijeja is still going strong today.

Khatafona – 'We were kidnapped', named following a spate of reports and rumours that criminals were abducting people to harvest their organs.

Mindeel – 'Handkerchief' – this very fine tob can be folded up to the size of a handkerchief.

Turab al dahab – 'Gold dust', a glittery golden patterned tob.

Sudatel – Named after the Sudan Telecommunications Company opened in 1993.

Tootal in Manchester was the first company to improve the sakobez and the bengali cotton material for its tobs. Popular Tootal tobs apart from the abu gijeja 'Tufted one' are the merkasse abu sihan of striped black voile, a material also used for the Nubian jarjara, and risalat london – 'Message from London', manufactured in Manchester, which since 1971 when Tootal closed down is no longer available in Sudan. The white voile tob with a zig border or white sehan, shiny band, was only obtained through shopping trips to the UK where the famous trader Abdel Samad sold it in London. Then, Swiss 'total' from Switzerland became fashionable. The Saudi company Al Adil Wa Al Zain run by a Sudanese manager would send the designs to Switzerland where they were produced. Later designs included the fastun, 'Serrated edge', and embroidery.

Popular tobs of unknown dates

Abu iyun kahila *– 'Eyes lined with kohl' – named after the song performed by Sudanese singer Ibrahim Awad.*

Al mubrad *– 'The file' – white with triangular dots likened to a steel file.*

Al nar walaat *– 'The fire is ignited' – a black voile/chiffon material with yellow and orange patterns.*

Al saagah wa al naagah *– 'Lightening' – bright bold colours.*

Dag al musmar *– 'Hitting the nail' – a small dotted design.*

Dimu al rahaloha *– 'Tears of the one (the bride) who has been moved to her husband's house'*

Dimu al tasabi *– 'Tears of youthfulness' – a phrase used by the Arabic poet Al Buhturi to describe the advent of spring. He decribes the dew drops on wildflowers as the tears of youthfulness shed by girls.*

Hariga *– 'Fire' – a red background with white embroidery.*

Rawda bakat *– 'Rawda cried' – Rawda is a common women's name.*

Yisimmak *– 'May it poison you' was a silk tob meaning one is poisoned with jealousy for not getting one like it.*

Zahrat al khalij *– 'Flower of the Gulf' – named after a women's magazine of the same name.*

Abu baskawita *– 'Biscuit design' – Georgette material with embroidery in the shape of oblong biscuits.*

Afrah al qulub *– 'Joys of the heart'.*

Al ghirah *– 'Jealousy' is a yellow-coloured tob.*

Al miraya *– 'The mirror' – plain background with shiny circles.*

Al muashish *– 'Nest' – a Georgette tob with silk embroidery.*

Al zaman al jamil *– 'The good times'.*

Dardigni fi al najila *– 'Roll me in the grass'.*

Diblat al khutuba *– 'Engagement ring'.*

Kharitat al Sudan *– 'Map of the Sudan'.*

Layali al kharif *– 'Nights of the rainy season'.*

Sadr al hamama *– 'Pigeon's breast' – a tob of two colours.*

Sikat al salama *– 'Safe travels' – made of dala-style material.*

Talafun al habayib *– 'Lovers' phone call'. The pattern here is a series of two short parallel, vertical lines between two horizontal lines repeated along the length of the tob.*

Al salam *– 'Peace'.*

Conclusions

After considering the ground covered in this study, can we conclude that there exists such a thing in the Sudan as distinct regional costumes? Probably it would be safer to say that there are regional similarities and preferences such as the prevalence of white amongst womenfolk of riverain Sudan and the prevalence of coloured *futas* in eastern Sudan. Within these broader groupings, however, the internal divisions would seem to be based on tribal entities in the east and on occupational and rural versus urban differences in the riverain Sudan. Since their dispersal in 1962, the Nubians' retention of their distinctive dress by the women seems to be a matter of ethnic identity rather than locality.

Origins and influences

It has proven very hard to draw satisfactory conclusions about the origins of Sudanese indigenous costumes and nothing seems to have been written about it so far. Apart from communities with unique tribal dress like the Umbororo for example, the Nuba, or those in southern Sudan, the costume of the rural Sudanese men does not differ very much from that of the Rashaida Arabs, the most recent arrivals from Arabia. One could therefore say that rural Sudanese male costume is basically of Arabian Peninsula in origin. The Sudanese *jallabiya* is not like the Hijazi *jallabiya*, but neither is it of the same cut as its Egyptian counterpart.
The *tob* of Sudanese women is so unlike anything of their neighbours' that it is difficult to find indicators of external influence. Even the terminology does not help, for terms like *firka*, *farda* and *tob* are merely names of various lengths of cloth. Perhaps the Sudanese women's *tob* derives from the Indian sari. We know from history that the port of Aydhab was for a very long time an important terminus for Indian trade goods coming up the Red Sea. Spreading inland from the Red Sea Coast, the coloured *futas* so common in eastern Sudan have become firmly established and worn in a way very like the Indian sari. The white *tob* of riverain Sudan does not have as much similarity to the manner of wearing as the Indian sari and yet what else does it resemble? Neither the murals at Faras nor the portraits at Musawarat nor the accounts of travellers, point to a continuity of the habit of wearing a long white veil. Certainly, there has always been handwoven white material produced in riverain Sudan but it seems to have been

worn more as a brief wrapper. The present lengthiness of the *tob* in the Sudan and the covering of the head no doubt are due to Islamic influence, but how the *tob* reached its traditional form of drapery is still not precisely clear. Of striking similarity, what is called *malhafa* amongst the Arabs of Mauritania and in Western Sahara, which translates to wrapper, or a throw, looks and is worn exactly like the *tob*.

Social structure

Stratification

Any tradition of group stratification in the Sudan tends to be based on the concept of nobility of birth rather than on possession and power. In northern Sudan until the beginning of the 20th century there were two main classes, the slaves and *al nas al hurrin*, free people. These were distinguished in their dress until the liberation of the slaves after the re-conquest and the establishment of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. Prior to their liberation, social mores imposed on slave women the obligation to bare their heads in the presence of their masters. Generally, slave women wore the *firka* or the *gurgab* rather than the *tob*, and slave men tended not to wear the turban. Within the society of *al nas al hurrin*, the free people, conservative and puritanical religious leaders were admired and imitated by many. As noted, the pull between the unworldly and ascetic, and the flamboyant and bold poles of leadership, has been a recurring occurrence in Sudanese society. These two divisions did not necessarily divide into secular and religious, for as may be seen from various accounts in Tabaqat Wad Dayfalla[1] there were always some both religious and secular leaders of both kinds. On the whole, it can be said that there has been a continuous push and pull in the development of the Sudanese costume. The forward push has often been initiated by the merchant class – the nouveau riche – and the bolder spirits in touch with foreign influences. The awareness of new fashions was often spread through songs, and although singing was for a very long time frowned upon, new fashions were often mentioned in songs sung at weddings by girls from the former slave class, and quickly learned by girls of 'good' families. Naturally, the widespread use of transistor radios all over the country sped up this process and now digital television and the Internet have made the Sudan part of the global village.

Sex segregation

Sudanese costume reveals very clearly the segregation of the sexes in varying degrees of rigidity at all levels of life. Even when men and women of the same family are engaged in the same work – cotton-picking for example – their clothing remains distinct. The honour of women and the decency of their dress are deeply associated with the men who are responsible for them. Until a girl is married her father and her brothers are responsible for the provision of her dress. Upon marriage, the husband takes over this responsibility, and this is symbolised by the very important gift of clothes presented by the bridegroom and the giving away of all her old clothes by the new bride. A girl usually comes to marriage with some gold gifted by her father, but her husband is expected to increase this when he is able to do so. A woman always knows and distinguishes how much of her gold came from these two different sources. Traditionally, northern Sudanese men are not usually flamboyant in their clothes. The scope of the various items and the colour range are very limited, unlike for example the Muslim men of northern Nigeria today. But a man's worldly success can quite often be seen in the amount of gold his wife wears. When a woman is divorced or widowed the responsibility for her clothing falls upon her adult sons. Social pressures ensuring this can be seen in such a saying as "He whose mother is naked will not clothe his aunty"[2]. If the sons are too young, the responsibility falls to the widow's brother. Traditionally, Sudanese brothers retain an affectionate and responsible care for their sisters and nieces throughout their lives, bringing gifts of clothing to them on appropriate occasions. This importance of the maternal uncle in the Sudan is a vestige of the former matrilineal structure of society in this area.

The effects of polygamy

In a society where a man is permitted and even expected to take more than one wife, the consequences of polygamy on the comparative status of the two sexes is apparent. Men do not have to dress to impress women but rather to show other men their status, conformity and confidence within the man's world. Women, on the other hand, are very conscious of the male gaze when they dress. A woman who may be very careless and slovenly when in the privacy of her own home will suddenly rush into a frenzy of appearance-enhancing activity as soon as there is to be an outing, be it to visit the hospital or a *bika*, paying of condolence. A wife threatened by the presence of another wife will take a great deal of trouble over her appearance in the presence of her husband, and will engage in a lot of oiling and perfuming

of her skin at night. Women whose husbands are likely to be rich enough to take another wife have no incentive to be thrifty, and will go to any length to get money from their husbands to beautify themselves. Certainly, in all the groups covered by this study, the female costume development culminates in the dress of the mature, married woman. Sometimes a woman who has been supplanted by one or more younger wives gives up altogether and dresses like a widow. It is a way of announcing that she has given up the sexual competition and gracefully retired from the scene.

Ritual status

In most of the groups studied, the various rites of passage are marked by ritual dress, and often include some symbolic mark of the individual's new status – as for example the carrying of a whip by the newly circumcised boy symbolising his entry into adulthood. The ritual of mourning (and seclusion for four months and ten days) is one of the most marked and noticeable costume changes amongst womenfolk of riverain Sudan that is still adhered to fairly rigidly. According to the nearness of the kinship, a plain white *tob* and dress must be worn with black or brown shoes and all cosmetics, perfume and jewellery are eschewed. Social pressures on close relatives of the deceased are still strong in this matter, and modern trends tend to favour black voile *tob*s and black, or black and white accessories and silver bracelets. For some widows, the period of mourning is a usual period for economising and some women cash their gold during this period and put the cash to useful purposes, such as house building.

Initiative versus social pressure

Asking a Sudanese individual why a certain fashion seems to be going out produces the reply that "the people have gone senile"[3]. On the other hand, if a new fashion is commented on the answer is often "all the people have started to wear it"[4]. Who, one might wonder, are these mysterious *nas* (people) and who are the individuals who are courageous enough to launch new styles? Certainly, in the Sudan as in many other countries, styles are often launched by the demi-monde and the twilight world of singers and artists once considered here as people of ill repute, and then later taken up by the 'respectable' society. The pressures on the individual which are repressive of innovation are summed up in the concept of *falhama*.

An individual may be accused of *falhama* if he or she is wearing clothes deemed to be beyond their social or financial status or indicative of an inappropriate age status that they have not yet attained. The opposite of *falhama* is *tawadu*, humility. *Tawadu* is the gesture of a wealthy or prominent individual dressing more modestly than they can afford. This is not to be compared with meanness but it arises out of a general desire to mingle with the crowd. Most Sudanese individuals dread being singled out and dress to achieve conformity. If a person stands out by any form of excellence, this is thought to invite envy and to risk attracting the evil eye.

Rusticity and urbanity

Another polarity of the dynamics of Sudanese costume evolves around the two poles of rural and urban. Both sides make fun of each other. The townsfolk and settled people mock the uncouthness and carelessness of the rustics and the rustics mock the exaggerated new styles of the towns when they first appear. An example of this is a comment on the 1970's fashion for flared trousers amongst modern young men and the general effeminate style of some of the longer-haired ones amongst them, "You look like your sister Sumaya; And your trousers like a gun case"[5]. The general effect of this ridiculing on both sides seems to be slowing down and modifying the changing modes rather than suppressing them altogether. There seems to be a pattern of change by which the younger and bolder spirits of both sexes in the provincial towns and villages gradually adopt fashions introduced there by students, effendis[6] and merchants in contact with Khartoum or the main provincial capitals. These fashions are then gradually copied in a modified form by the locals and the local traders and tailors begin to cater for the demand. The neighbouring rustics 'across the river' or 'upcountry' gradually adopt certain modified and cheaper versions of these fashions but at a much slower rate, mainly because the local traders and tailors are standardising what is available. In most provincial towns, some traders specialise in clothing especially for the rustics (so called 'Arabs').

Costume and social change

If in the rural areas, costume change is slow, it is also a reflection of the resistance to social and technological change in the region. Many rural communities reflect the stern patriarchal social

patterns which tend to dampen the adventurousness of younger spirits. But in the capital, the rapidness with which fashion changes reflects the velocity of social change. The most obvious example of this is in the changing status of women in society. Formerly an unmarried girl was to be kept modestly hidden, and was not allowed to apply such cosmetic techniques as depilation or *henna*, limited to married women. Now all these rules have been practically reversed, ever since it became acceptable for unmarried girls to mingle at the university, work and the marketplace. Consciously or unconsciously, the young woman of today is out to look as attractive as possible at all times, and cosmetics, perfumes, wigs, jewellery, high-heeled shoes and all the trappings of modern finery are employed, including skin-whitening creams. After the miniskirt came into fashion in Europe, it gradually caught on in the Sudan and *tob*s became finer and finer so that the legs could be seen through it. Then the maxi full-length skirt arrived and had a modifying effect on the *tob* which shrunk into a shorter garment half-way between a *tarha* (headscarf) and a *tob*. Perhaps it is not surprising that the superior status of men inferred by a polygamous society has been slightly shaken by all this. These attractively dressed girls with their new found economic independence are eligible for marriages of choice rather than arranged cousin marriages as in the older pattern of Sudanese society. As a result, the younger generation of men are in fact becoming more flamboyant in their dress since mutual attraction rather than arranged marriages is currently becoming the basis of marriages. Even in later years, when the state imposed legislation governing women's dress in public and the black *abaya* and *niqab* appeared, women were able to adapt these and did not relinquish their independence.

General directions of change

Apart from the cataclysmic effect of the Mahdist religious reform movement, Sudanese costume changes have always been moving in a certain cyclic pattern of movement from conservative to modern, ascetic to worldly, *baladi* (local) to European and regional to national. It is the latter with which we are concerned about in this book, since this is a record of Sudanese indigenous costume. There does seem to be something which gradually emerged as a Sudanese national costume and indeed for men this is also the costume worn by Sudanese ambassadors to meet foreign heads of state to which they are accredited. It consists of white *jallabiya*, *tagiya*, white turban, plain *markub* and white, brown or grey *abaya*, overcoat.

Every Sudanese man whatever he may wear to work has more than one set of such a costume, to be worn on Fridays, special occasions and for funerals. For Sudanese women, the national dress has changed radically in as much as the traditional hairstyle and *fidayat*, earrings, have almost disappeared from the main towns. The *tob* survives and it seems likely to remain as the distinctive national costume of Sudanese women wherever they are, including for women ambassadors from Sudan to other countries. Wigs and high-standing hairstyles, which were so popular in the 70s for setting off the *tob* around the face have been replaced by matching headscarves which cover all the hair. This *muhajaba* style is now compulsory in all public offices by government decree.

Thus, with no intention to diminish the importance of the long-standing and distinctive regional dress that exists in other parts of the Sudan such as the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile region, it can be said that it is this costume, described above, which has come to represent traditional Sudanese dress.

Then and Now

The previous chapters explored traditional Sudanese costumes in Nubia, the riverain and eastern Sudan up to 1975 when this study was undertaken within an MA dissertation. The task left is to sum up as much as possible the main changes that have happened to Sudanese apparel until then and in the last forty years since then. These decades have seen remarkable and sometimes traumatic changes reflecting political, religious, social and economic trends that have impacted the lifestyle of most Sudanese, both rural and urban. With access to the Internet and globalisation, consumerism is today the order of the day, although more so in urban than in rural areas. Many of the various apparel fashions reflect these historical changes, many of which have often been met with the typical Sudanese humour. Accordingly, there will be a noticeable change of style in writing this final chapter with an attempt at a more light-hearted approach.

Change

The economic disaster caused by the failure of Sudan's cotton sales in 1958, and the consequent ban on imports, had a sartorial outcome in the renewed popularity of locally-woven *tobs*. The weavers of Shendi benefited and responded swiftly to these needs and Shendi *fardas*, cotton *tobs*, embellished with many artistic innovations like tasselled borders, became the fashion. This was soon followed by the importation of Indian saris, a material both cheap, cheerful, and colourful in design. They became popularly known as *tob al jeran*, *tob* for visiting the neighbours, indicating daily usefulness but not being 'the best' one reserved for outings. Following Nimeiri's May Revolution of 1969[1] a socialist policy of nationalisation culminated in the sudden sequestration of all the foreign trading companies in Sudan. In fact, the consequences were so disastrous that only a year later Nimeiri was compelled to call together some of these businessmen to a meeting in London to beg them to return to their sequestered businesses and homes in the Sudan. Meanwhile, this had resulted in no more imported *tobs*, hence the newest ones came to be named *risalat london* – Message from London, implying that the only new *tobs* would be those brought as gifts from overseas. The other consequence of the economic setback, coupled with the politically-driven drastic dismissal of many officials at all levels under the slogan *lil salih al am*, 'for the sake of the common good', was the beginning

of the brain-drain and of the current Sudanese diaspora. Sudanese men began to leave the country for Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, the USA, Australia, Canada and even Brazil to work as professionals, academics and as industrial and farming workers – a practice continued today. The most traumatic effect of this on Sudanese dress was the arrival of imported garments, and the word *mustawrad*, imported, became a fashionable epithet. Whereas in the past most Sudanese women aspired to own, or to have access to, a sewing machine and made their own and their children's dresses, now expatriate fathers began sending ready-made clothes for their children. These were of inferior quality and synthetic material made overseas and often ill-fitting as the absent father could not estimate his offspring's sizes. At this time, little boys were often dressed in miniature khaki army officer's uniforms during the Eid marking the end of fasting.

Children dressed in their Eid clothes today and previously with boys appearing as miniature army officers

The other peculiarity from the shopping by these early economic migrants, expatriates or *mughtarbeen*, was that they initially could not find in their countries of residence the right width of cloth for *tobs*, so they usually sent or brought two *tobs* for each lady. The recipient took the extra material from the wide cloth and added it to the narrow one, thus creating the *tob muragaa* (patched) which quickly became the fashion until such time as the cloth merchants in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf began to cater for the increasing demands of the Sudanese expatriates. The momentum for this increased when the expatriates' wives began to join their husbands abroad and had direct impact on the supply and demand situation.

On the other hand, a different and regrettable change came about in the process, when the expatriate Sudanese women began to wear the black *abaya*. This came about as a result of two pressures. In Saudi Arabia, sometimes the 'Morality Police' rebuked Sudanese women for wearing the *tob* in public although some were, and are, brave enough to resist this and answered that the *tob* is perfectly *sutra* 'modest' by Islamic standards. These brave women pointed out that the Sudanese women pilgrims had been going to the Hajj at Mecca wearing their white *tobs* for centuries. Other Sudanese women took to the *abaya* to avoid being conspicuous in these countries and eventually began to wear them also on their return to the Sudan. The black *abaya* has now become part of everyday life in the capital and most towns in the Sudan. It is very popular amongst girl students as it saves them from harassment and the onerous laundering of the white *tobs* previously worn by them and still in use by all women employees. The other influence that profoundly affected many Sudanese families in Saudi Arabia was the fundamentalist religious influence of the Wahabis. This pseudo-puritanical doctrine affected many Sudanese men and women. As well as the *abaya*, Sudanese women began to wear black socks and gloves and some of them even began to cover their faces. Female members of another puritanical Islamic sect, the Ansar al Sunna, wear a distinct cover-up of two layers of very heavy cloth in grey, brown or black. The Ansar al Sunna men wear short *jallabiyas* above the ankle and heavy beards. This is now commonly seen in the Sudan even though the very hot climate is not conducive to socks and gloves. Many rural women who work in agriculture such as cotton-picking or goat-herding do not wear these hot garments when at work but some don them on social occasions to show how trendy they are! Recently, new practical 'modest' garments for men and women have come into fashion. *Alallah* for men is a style of Pakistani *gamis-sirwal* with matching *tagiya* in striped cotton. For women, long-sleeved dresses in cotton with matching *tarha*, headscarf in voile, are imported from

Shamarat and Alallah in 2016

India. This has four amusing names: *shamarat* – gossip, because it can be donned in haste to catch the latest gossip, *haboba jannat* – the old woman has gone crazy, *al mara maragat* – she's gone out in a hurry, and *al zawja al raba* – the fourth wife, whose husband cannot afford four *tobs*, and who because of her ranking is at the bottom of the pecking order.

The most striking sartorial change to expatriate Sudanese men was the growing of the beard. When Islamic influence in the Sudan was at its strongest, it was almost universal and the beards were very bushy. Now it has become a fashion amongst many urban young men to cultivate well-trimmed neat beards of the Gulf Arabs. These modern men are also now going in for saunas and facials at male beauty parlours and putting selfies of themselves on Facebook. The bespoke, tailored, white cotton *jallabiya* has retained its popularity in the Sudan being much more voluminous and far more suitable for the hot climate than the tight, high-collared *thawb* of the Arabian Peninsula. Also, the Sudanese men have not abandoned their splendid turbans which insulate their heads from the sun so much better than the *shemagh*, head cloth of Arabia. However, the traditional round, handmade *tagiya*, either white, orange or green has been replaced at first by imported Gulf-style crocheted ones, and now almost universally by the stiff, cylindrical Pakistani cap actually manufactured in China. Footwear for men has also changed, and the traditional, locally-made *markub* of tan or maroon-dyed leather or leopard skin lost out to Indian-style sandals. The younger generation now go in for brightly coloured trainers which reflect the influence of foreign footballers and stars seen on television.

Not all Sudanese expatriates went to Arabia, many went to Europe and the USA. The USA became so popular that 'green card' became a word for desirability all over the Sudan. So much so that many a young man has grown up complaining to his mother for returning to the Sudan for his birth, Sudanese women commonly return to their mother's home for giving birth, and thus denying him USA citizenship by birth. The youngsters who did grow up overseas had an influence on the generation of the 1970s. The influence by the African Pride and Black is Beautiful movements in the US as personified by Malcom X introduced Afro cuts and flared jeans for males, while the young ladies went in for wigs and high hairstyles which held their *tobs* well above their faces. Nimeiri's wife was said to wear two wigs one on top of the other!

Then came the sudden puritanical change in 1983 with the arbitrary introduction of Sharia Law, resulting from Nimeiri's switch to seeking a power base with Hassan Al Turabi's Muslim Brotherhood. This was perhaps one of Sudanese women's darkest hours. All girls of whatever

age were compelled to wear the *tarha*, headscarf. All women employees of the government were instructed to cover their hair with headscarves and to wear long-sleeved tops and long skirts. Female university students were not allowed on campus wearing trousers although all schoolgirls were wearing the compulsory uniform of *tarha*, cotton tops and trousers. 'Immodest' dress in public remains a punishable offence to this day. Moreover, reflecting the military regime of the time, the school uniform for girls and boys imitated army camouflage material. Up until 1969 when the Minister of education Muhieldin Sabir changed all the syllabi, the beginning of the school year and uniform, all the boys wore the *jallabiya* while girls wore dresses coloured according to their school's dress code.

University students in 2017 and in the 70s

University professors in the first half of the 20th century, a European in shorts and Bombay bowler and an Egyptian dressed like the Sheikhs of Al Azhar University in Egypt

Schoolchildren today

A girl from Unity High School and an elementary schoolboy in the 60s

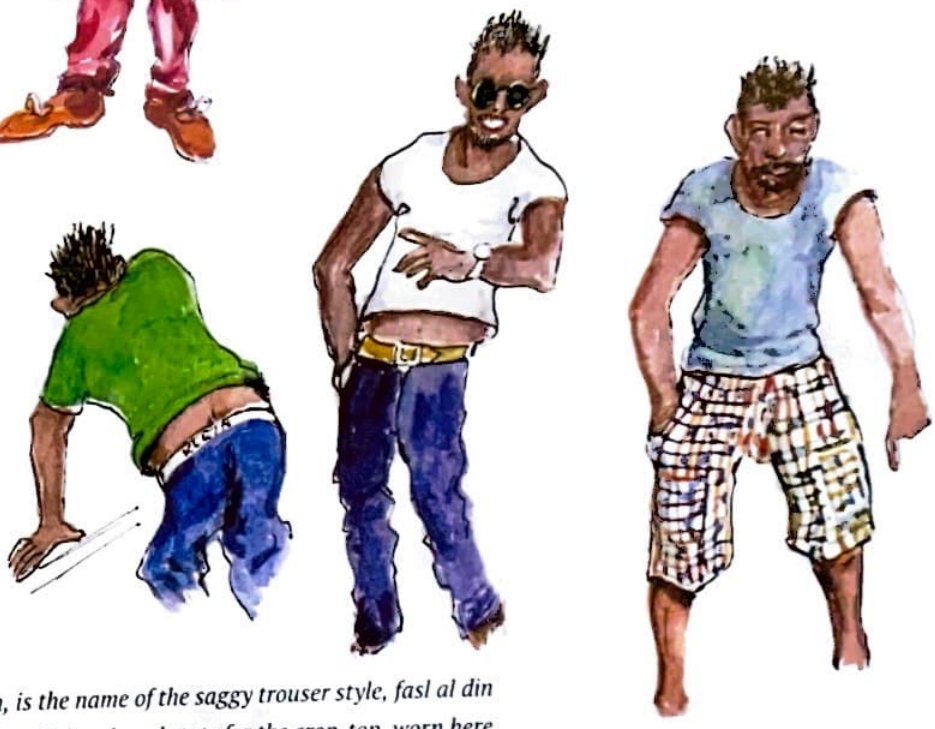
Female university students today and in the 1970s

Al Sharia tarshagat, 'Sharia is busted' the name of a long skirt with revealing side slits

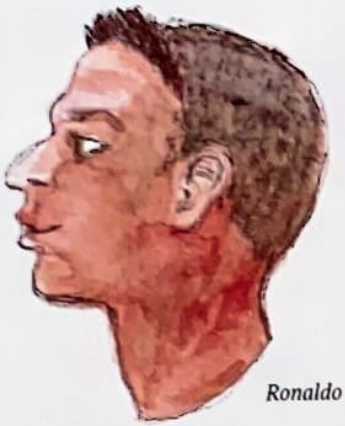
New emerging trends

The compulsory long-sleeve rule for women brought in the fashion for the *karina*. This is a tight-fitting, long-sleeved, jersey of synthetic material produced in China – hot and sticky to wear. This *karina* does not suit ladies with big bosoms and rolls of fat, as many Sudanese women themselves commonly remark, but still is often the preferred garment worn under the *tob*. The younger ladies have made bold innovations with these *karinas* achieving colour combinations with matching *tarhas*, handbags and shoes worn with a prevalent long skirt in denim. These compulsory long sleeves are often set off by elaborate costume jewellery bracelets and man-sized watches. For parties and weddings, they often wear gold, silver or shiny satin finished *karinas* under spaghetti-strapped, décolleté, imported evening gowns. The bravado and inventiveness of these young ladies reflect the brave Sudanese tendency to bypass oppression. In line with the long-term and ongoing Sudanese tendency to give funny names to things some modern trends for women and men that emerge in the process come with equally creative and telling names.

One of the latest trends is the tonic, a corruption of 'tunic'. This is a smart outfit worn by young men and women when they are out visting people or going to the mosque. Sudan's version of the tonic, which resembles the Pakistani shalwar kameez, may have originated there but is now sewn by local tailors. It is made of cotton and can be decorated with ready-made braids, gitan or machine-embroidered. This elaborate decoration is another break-away from the traditional plain white, off-white and beige colours of men's jallabiyas.



The sistim – System, is the name of the saggy trouser style, fasl al din an al dawla – Separation of church and state for the crop-top, worn here with the skinny trousers. Adini hugna – Give me an injection which may be referring to drugs, for the short-sleeved T-shirt and habibi shatifni – Sweetheart wash my feet, for the three-quarter length trousers.



Ronaldo

Pogba

Balotelli

Neymar

Saksouka, influenced by Khaleeji (Gulf) beard styles

There was a time when the *nas*, people, copied the Royals and the aristocrats in terms of fashion. Now, these 'richies' are buying torn and 'distressed' jeans – which originated as prison garb in California – at great prices and international celebrities have become trendsetters. Some of the popular hairstyles sported these days by young Sudanese men are inspired by international footballers and elaborate beard styles from the Gulf are very trendy.

Today women's hairstyles have been affected by 'Islamic' government-imposed regulations. Compulsory covering of the hair by headscarves has resulted in the disappearance of the

traditional, expensive[2] and time-consuming *mushat* – traditional tiny plaits following the shape of the skull and often with added horsehair to lengthen them. Paradoxically these tiny plaits have reappeared as a fashion amongst many European ladies whose pink scalps do not really enhance this style. Many brave Sudanese ladies have overcome this imposition of the headscarf in several ways. They have used it as an element of colour combination matching other garments, or highly decorated with beads and sequins on the part of the scarf appearing over the forehead. To show or assert their pride in their abundant hair, many young ladies add to the present Victorian chignon style with amplification of a false donut-shaped pad called a *kaaka* or a feather black hair piece called 'artichoke', thus adding considerable bulk at the back of their heads. This style raises the scarf up thus hinting at long necks, for ages a much vaunted feature of Arabic love poetry.
Also the new trend for permanently tattooing the eyebrows came into fashion in the early 2010s . While acknowledging that many aspects of female fashion have changed it is interesting to see old fashions coming back, as recently noticed: a female bank clerk in Khartoum was wearing a tiny gold stud in her right nostril and so the *zumam*, albeit smaller, has come back to fashion in the capital from where it had vanished.

The kaaka, artichoke and jalaxy (galaxy) hairstyles

Bride wearing a dress emphasising her behind

Wedding attire

Bridal fashions have changed dramatically over the last three decades. The long white gown with bare, décolleté or lacy shoulders has become prevalent not only in urban and rural Sudan, but almost globally. No doubt romantic soap operas on television are universally responsible. These lavish and expensive bridal gowns in the Sudan are now mostly hired for the event and the shop windows displaying this 'once in a lifetime' gown for hire are surprisingly numerous all over town. Some families invest in an expensive bridal gown, usually imported, and the ownership remains in the family worn by several sisters and cousins. It is much more economical to incur only the cost of dry cleaning as well as having a sentimental value. For the *jirtig* ceremony, on the second day, the bride wears an elaborate red *tob* over a red satin dress symbolising the blood shed in defloration. Bridegrooms nowadays nearly all appear on the first day in a European suit matching the brides' fashion. Often of black but sometimes in white and lighter colours, this suit is usually worn only once and probably ends up in a cupboard! Recently, bridegrooms have reverted to traditional dress for the *jirtig* ceremony which can take place the next day or that same night if the couple is proceeding on honeymoon, prompting the humorous saying *al shiriya fi al nar wa al arees fi al matar*, "breakfast is cooking but the groom

Customised white gowns seen in Khartoum around 2012, one with Islamic hijab head-cover and long sleeves and one backless to show a henna design tattooed between the shoulder blades for which all male visitors including her brothers were kept out of the wedding hall

Bum-enhancers, made of elasticated satin, known as ardaf, thighs, a dislocated term for 'bum-booster', are available in Khartoum markets and bought by those not well endowed!

is at the airport". His traditional *jallabiya* is now always made of the much loved *surrati* off-white cotton *tob* with rich red borders and a *tagiya* is often made of the same material ornamented on the forehead with a golden *fidaya* crescent.

Official dress

What remains to be mentioned is the change in uniforms of the military, police, nurses and political VIPs. Ever since the Condominium, nurses and midwives wore white calf-length dresses and aprons and white *tarhas* for work. In 1973 the Soviet-built hospital at Soba was taken over by the University of Khartoum as a teaching hospital. The doctors and administrators recruited the best nurses possible and devised for them a uniform consisting of a pastel-coloured trouser suit with optional white nurses' cap or white *tarha*. This uniform has been copied in most of the private hospitals today. Rural midwives still wear the white dress, apron and *tarha* uniform devised for them by the Midwives Training College Omdurman in the 1920s.

Police uniform has undergone several changes over the last decades. At first the khaki *jibba*, shorts and puttees plus the khaki turban was much like what the soldiers of the Sudan Defence Force wore. Then around 1950, the police changed into stiffly starched khaki bush shirt, shorts, black puttees and boots all

Soldiers of the Nimeiri regime influenced by Cuba, a Civil Police Constable 1950–1960, and the Sudan Defence Force from the 1920s until after Independence in 1956

topped by a very smart shady black felt hat turned up at the left like the Australian regiments in World War II. Since then, traffic policemen have donned a uniform easily spotted in the traffic of white jacket and trousers and a dark blue cap. Police on other duties and customs officers wear blue jackets and long trousers and their female counterparts wear long blue caftan-style tops, blue trousers and their blue caps are worn on top of their blue veils which some say looks rather comical!

The earliest soldiers of the Sudan Defence Force wore khaki uniforms much influenced by what the British had achieved – or imposed – with the Indian Army. The word khaki, meaning dust in the Urdu language, indicates a camouflaging with the sandy environment of northern India, and as such was also suitable for Sudan's environment. The Sudanese soldiers marching in formation with rifles on their shoulders used to look splendid with their tightly-folded turbans, round-necked, stiffly-starched *jibbas* over khaki shorts with khaki puttees and shiny brown leather boots and belts to match. A vestige of this can be seen in the uniform of the ceremonial guards at the old Republican Palace today. This all changed with the communist beginnings of Nimeiri's regime when all uniforms changed to imitation of the socialist regime in Cuba. Khaki gave way to jungle camouflage and has remained so to the present day.

The last uniform group to be mentioned are the cabinet ministers and their senior underlings and bodyguards. Earliest dignitaries wore the traditional *jallabiya* with *tarbush* or turban followed by European suits during British colonial rule. Now after independence, the ministers wear blue cotton, long-sleeved, safari suits and their underlings the same in grey. This is an improvement on the previously ubiquitous wearing of the full European suit and tie in warm serge[3].

National costume

In this work, we hope to have succeeded in endorsing the pride in traditional costume of the Sudanese peoples covered in this study. As mentioned in the introduction, the scope of this research meant it was unable to cover the entire range of Sudan's rich and diverse regional traditional costumes. Thus, while acknowledging that the spotless white *jallabiya,* turban, *shal* and *abaya* worn by every Sudanese ambassador presenting his credentials anywhere in the world, accompanied by his wife who, like female Sudanese ambassadors, is dressed in a suitably diaphanous, elegant, traditional *tob,* may be considered the Sudanese national

costume, it is important to note the existence of other regional varieties of costumes. In this vein, three exemplary illustrations from nomad communities from north and south Kordofan photographed in 2011 by Enikō Nagy for her book[4] about intangible heritage in Sudan, present an outlook to the wide array of costumes in other parts of Sudan. We therefore hope that this work will set an example and become a motivator for further research into these areas.

An Umbororo girl in a handsewn dress made of thin strips of cloth, in the Meyas area of Blue Nile State in south-eastern Sudan. This everyday dress is worn with copper bracelets and typical silver hair ornaments.

A man from the Nuba Mountains in southern Sudan dances in the kambala harvest ritual which is also a rite of passage for young men. The dancer wears buffalo horns and kashkosh, leg rattles made of folded, dry palm leaves with seeds in them, and a leather amulet over a bare chest. Today, a T-shirt covers the chest and the traditional leg rattles are often made of old tomato puree tins.

A Shenabla woman in Um Arada in North Kordofan performs a dance that imitates the rocking movements of a female camel which is regarded as a symbol of fertility, pride and beauty in this camel-breeding nomadic community. The dancer is wearing a zumam, nose ring, silver head decorations called shil-shil with a single ostrich feather, rishat niam, in the middle.

Notes

Chapter I – Historical Threads

1 A.J. Arkell, 1953, A History of the Sudan from the Earliest Times to 1821, pp. 20-24

2 Desmond Clark in a personal communication

3 P.L. Shinnie, 1956, Meroë, the City of the Ethiopians: Being an Account of a First Season's Excavations on the Site, 1909–1910, p. 47

4 D. Dunham, 1950, The Royal Cemeteries of Kush, plates LXV, LXVI, LXVII, LXVIII, LXIX

5 B.N. Haycock, 1972, Landmarks in Cushite History, Journal of Egyptian Archaeology, Vol. 8 Aug, p. 225

6 P.L. Shinnie, 1976, Meroitic North and South: A study in Cultural Contrasts, p. 13

7 Ibid plates 16 and 15

8 J. Garstang, 1911, Meroë, the City of the Ethiopians: Being an Account of the First Season's Excavations on the Site, 1909–1910, p. 47

9 P.L. Shinnie, op.cit, p. 45

10 J.S. Trimingham, 1949, The Christian Church in Post-War Sudan, p. 49

11 P.L. Shinnie, 1961, Ghazali a Monastery in the Northern Sudan, p. 11

12 J. Vantini, 1970, The Excavations of Faras: A Contribution to the History of Christian Nubia, pp. 66–67

13 K. Michalowski, 1974, Faras. This book is packed with descriptions of the clothes of priests and nobles depicted in the Faras frescoes and gives detailed explanation of the iconographic significance of most items.

14 Ibid plate 22, p. 48, Michalowski suggests *galabiya* for the long white tunics worn by Nubians in this picture.

15 Sudan National Museum Khartoum Inventory No. 118 Nativity Scene

16 Sudan National Museum Khartoum Inventory No. 108 Passion Scene

17 Illustration reproduced by Griselda El Tayib from K. Michalowski's reconstruction of the fresco in his book Faras, 1974

18 O.G.S. Crawford, 1951, The Fung Kingdom of Sennar. Appendix 15 gives a full discussion of the *tagiya um garnen* as a frequently recurring symbol of authority in Sudanese history.

19 M. Wenzel, 1972, House Decoration in Nubia, pp. 28–30

20 A woman possessed of the *zar* spirit holds a ceremony in which the spirits' capricious demands are sought to be met. At the ritual a professional medium claims to interpret the *zar's* wishes, which have to be fulfilled before the spirit is satisfied and stops agitating the woman. A gold cross is one of the items frequently demanded by the zar as are other items considered taboo for women such as whisky, cigarettes etc.

21 Y.F. Hassan, 1967, The Arabs and the Sudan: From the Seventh to the early Sixteenth Century, p. 37

22 However this theory is disputed by L.F.Nader, Sudan Notes and Records, 1931, p. 61

23 J. Bruce, 1805, Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile, p. 113

24 T. Krump, The Sudanese Travels by Theodoro Krump, translated by Jay Spaulding, p. 113

25 The illustration of the King of the Fazogli is reproduced by Griselda El Tayib from an engraving by Auguste Blanchard in Voyage a Méroé by Frédéric Cailliaud, 1942

26 A *murabit* is a Muslim travelling holy man

27 J.L. Burckhardt, 1817, Travels in Nubia

28 J.L. Burckhardt, Travels in Nubia, pp. 199–200. *Senbal* presumably refers to the aromatic flower *sumbul*.

29 Ibid pp. 261–281

30 In fact, there are a whole string of villages on the West bank of the Nile opposite Shendi where horizontal hand loom weaving has been going on for ages. It forms an alternative cottage industry during slack agricultural periods in villages like Jebelab, and Nurab. In the 1950s a small mechanised weaving industry was set up at Nurab. Some Coptic weavers have set up vertical hand looms in Shendi town. Personal observation 1973.

31 R. Hill, Egypt in the Sudan 1820–1881, 1959

32 H.A. MacMichael, 1922, Vol 2. p. 52 from manuscript D.7 – CLXXII "Musa Pasha arrived 4th Salar '79... the Hakimdaria regained its splendour... All this he did that people might tread the path of civilization and progress". He also ordered them to wear 'Turkish clothes'. Also R. Hill, 1970, a French diarist in the Sudan makes the following entry for December 4th 1939 "*Shaykhs*... are to dress in Turkish fashion and are not allowed to come to the Pasha's presence except in this dress under pain of several days in prison".

33 J.L. Burckhardt, op. cit, p. 396

34 Personal observation January 1975. This shoemaker was about 60 years old and was making a pair of *abu zirra* for a customer of the Shukriya tribe.

35 G. Cuzzi, Gordon, Gessi e la Riconquista del Sudan, by Carlo Zaghi (translation) 1968, p. 65

36 Here, the holy war against the foreigners
37 T. Krump, op. cit, p. 72 also some religious families still keep in their *khalwas* (koranic schools) some old *jibbas* going back to the time of the Funj.
38 Exhibited in the Khalifa's House Museum, Omdurman
39 A massacre on Aba Island on the White Nile, when government troops were dispatched to detain the Mahdi's son Al Hadi but were confronted by the Ansar, followers of the Mahdi.
40 G. Cuzzi, op. cit, p. 68
41 Renamed in 1955 by governor general decree from Gordon's Memorial College later to become the University of Khartoum.

Chapter II – Nubian Dress

1 *Shahiya* – the word is derived from the word *shai*, tea, and described a striped, silky material, usually blue and white, sometimes brown and white. At one time it was favoured by men of the leisured classes in Egypt for wearing as a loose caftan when relaxing and drinking tea before it came to be used as the uniform of *guftans* of waiters in high class hotels in Egypt and later in the Sudan. Many of these waiters have traditionally been Nubians.
2 Informant: Sayed Mohamed Abdulla from Sukkot
3 Personal observation
4 Hujla Abdel Majid – Village 21, Khashm al Girba
5 There are only four colour terms in Nubian and the word *dessi* describes the part of the spectrum from blue through green to brown.
6 J.L. Burckhardt, 1882, Travels in Nubia, 2nd Edition, p. 43 "both men and women go naked but the latter wear leather amulets round the neck, copper armlets and bracelets and silver earrings".
7 Ibid., p. 29. This may have been a loincloth such as depicted in Frescoes of pharaonic times. The Nubians call it *sakindi*.
8 C.R. Lepsius, 1880, Nubische Grammatik, Berlin, Hertz Verlag, defines *beyye* as 'Schürze der Mädchen' (apron) but two of my Halfawi informants used this word in two different connections.
9 R. Hill, 1970, On the Frontiers of Islam, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 218
10 J. Bonomi, 1862, Egypt, Nubia, Ethiopia, London, Smith and Elder, p. 6
11 Personal communication from Professor Plumley, Cambridge Expedition to Qasr Ibrim, 1962
12 M. Wenzel, 1972, House Decoration in Nubia, London, Duckworth, p. 11
13 One informant, Mohamed Sheikh Al Din of Village 21, Khashm al Girba area, thought that the word *bash* possibly derived from the word Pasha.
14 The Basalwa (from a Turkiya term meaning 'small onion') are small Arabic speaking groups of traders and artisans from upper Egypt who after migrating with the Turks during the Ottoman Empire have settled amongst the Nubians in Wadi Halfa and have been resettled with them in Halfa al Jadida.
15 This feature is more likely to have derived from European costumes of the 19th century as suggested by M. Wenzel, 1972, op. cit.
16 Two possible origins of the word *merkasse* were suggested to me one by a Nubian informant who suggested it might derive from the Nubian term *merkatti* meaning 'smuggled' goods. The other possibility is the corruption of the word marquisite – which Burckhardt mentions amongst trade goods at Shendi in 1913.
17 *Sufra* – is used to describe a dining room, dining table, or an oval serving dish – the neck opening of this garment is of oval shape.
18 People kept the numbers that were allocated to their new villages and refused to give these villages names to protest their resettlement to New Halfa.
19 From an old Arabic term *boja* meaning to open up in a rippling manner. Trousers like this are illustrated by Cailliaud. F., Voyage à Meroë, Paris, Vol. 1, plate 3, opp. p. 240.
20 K. Michalowski, 1974, Faras, plate 11, here St. Peter and St. John the Evangelist wear slippers with a pointed upper like the Nubian *dir*.
21 In Arabic *qaus* or *qaws* means bow or arc.
22 J.L. Burckhardt, op. cit. p. 29
23 *Shil-shil* – is an onomatopoeic word which charmingly evokes the tinkling of these ornaments in movement. It derives from the Nubian word *shille* – swing.
24 *Beyye* – has also been used by some Nubain informants to describe the rahat and also a certain necklace of agates.
25 *Sho* – is the Nubian word for amulet and comes from the hieroglyphic which in ancient Egyptian means 'something written'.
26 *Matarig* – this is still commonly worn in eastern Sudan.
27 The phenomenon of the *zar* is explained in Chapter I.

Notes

28 *Lekik* – an onomatopoeic word describing the tinkling noise of adjacent bracelets. Dr Herman Bell in a personal communication informed me that L is not pronounced at the beginning of the word in Nubian.

Chapter III – Rashaida Costume

1 A. A. Hassan, 1975, The History of the Rashaida and their Oral History, Khartoum. But MacMichael, 1922, A History of the Arabs in the Sudan, Cambridge, gives the date 1846.
2 Zubeidiya is another name which the Rashaida are commonly known in the Sudan but a name by which they themselves like to disown.
3 *Rusas* – simply means lead. Quantities of these silvery lead beads are sold on strings by the *duraa* length by Rashaida shopkeepers. They are brought in from the Hijaz usually by individual Rashaida travellers and are much sought-after – the supply often falls short of demand.
4 *Tilul* – a decorative band of *rusas* already sewn onto bands of plaiting in zigzag patterns. The preparation of these bands is said to be a 'folk industry' of the women of Hijaz.
5 Quotation from Arabic poet Al Muthaqab Al Abdi
6 Sunni Ben Naqa, The Rashaida, p. 54, published in Arabic
7 Ibid., p. 52
8 Decorative motifs such as the *farashas* (butterflies in Arabic) are added to it: three pieces, one long trapezium shape of beaten silver with filigree pattern overlaying the surface and with tiny chains and silver beads dangling from the lower edges.
9 Halima Ahmed Ali, F. age 30, married, Zineimat branch, Al Rattaja area, camped near Village 21, Khashm al Girba.
10 Fatima Mohamed, F. age 34, married with 4 children, Hayan branch, Al Rattaja area, Khashm al Girba.
11 Folk story documented by Abdulla El Tayib, Heroes of Arabia, O.U.P., 1965

Chapter IV – Beja Apparel

1 Y. F. Hassan, 1997, The Arabs and the Sudan, p. 141, According to the Halenga tribal legends, the Hawasin (originally from Arabia) were horse owners and always carried whips which the Abyssinians called in Amharic *halenka*, a name by which they were afterwards known.
2 H. A. MacMichael, 1922, A History of the Arabs in the Sudan
3 The incense-laced smoke bath detoxifies the skin and gives it a shining look, perfuming the woman for days.
4 Informant Sadik Ali Abdel Rahman
5 *Funjara* – comes from the Arabic *tufaranja*, which means to imitate the Faranjas (Europeans). The word has been turned inside out as often happens with Arabic words in a whimsical way.
6 A term used as a unit of measurement for lengths of material, probably from the English word 'sheet'.
7 I. H. Zulfo, 1973, Karari (Arabic) p. 251, quotes the famous British imperialist poet Rudyard Kipling:
"So here is to you Fuzzy-Wuzzy at your home in the Sudan
You are a poor benighted heathen but a first class fighting man
And here is to you Fuzzy-Wuzzy with your hayrick head of hair,
You big black bounding beggar – for you broke a British Square!"
8 H. A. MacMichael, 1922, A History of the Arabs in the Sudan, Vol. 1, pp. 36–37
9 Y. F. Hassan, 1967, p. 139
10 Personal observation
11 Y. F. Hassan, 1997, The Arabs and the Sudan, p. 235, footnote 257
12 Translated from a Hadendawa wedding song: *Aya daiti tedobayn kwatatera haya daydoba.*
13 J. L. Burckhardt, 1822, Travels in Nubia, p. 396
14 The flaps of these *faranji* style pockets probably derive from European military uniforms where pocket flaps were supposed to keep the rain running off and 'keep the gun powder dry'.
15 The 'Afro Cut' style was started by the Black Power movement in USA in the 1960s. Instead of black men and women mimicking the styles of whites and trying to straighten their hair, its slogan 'Black is beautiful' deliberately emphasised the coils of their hair. This fashion became so successful that some whites permed their hair to make it frizzy.
16 I. H. Zulfo, Karari, 1973, picture facing p. 288
17 The line "He does not run away – his *khulal* does not fall" is translated from a Hadendawa wedding praise song: *Idadeib w'or wa hilal beegid.*

Chapter V – Attire of the Riverain Sudan

1 A. J. Arkell, More about Funj Origins, S.N.R, Vol. 28, pp. 87–88
2 H. A. MacMichael, 1992, History of the Arabs in the Sudan, p. 403

3 See Chapter I
4 Ibid., p. 16
5 C. Plumer, 1970, African Textiles, p. 127
6 G.M. Crowfoot, Weaving and Spinning in the Sudan, S.N.R, Vol. 4, 1921 pp. 20–38
7 J.L. Burckhardt, op. cit., p.264
8 Personal observation
9 Personal observation at the well at Naqa in January 1972
10 Names of *tobs* here are mainly from informants in Al Damer
11 J.C. Flugel, 1930, p. 37, under the sub heading of Extension of Bodily Self "the effects (...) are by no means confined to the sense of vision. By the actual wearer of the garments they are largely appreciated through the sense of touch".
12 J.L. Burckhardt, op. cit., p. 198
13 *Sakarota* is a corruption of the Italian 'seta cruda' – raw silk
14 Michalowaki, 1974, Faras, p. 148
15 The repetition of short phrases glorifying Allah
16 Personal impression
17 In Arabic, titled: Shulukh – Its origins and role in Sudan's central Nile-basin area, published by the Khartoum University Press in 1976
18 J.M. Crowfoot, op. cit, pp. 1–32
19 See Abdulla El Tayib, Min Nafidhat al Qitar, K.U.P. 1950 where he gives a detailed description of this ritual – also Abdualla El Tayib, 1956, S.N.R., Vol. 37, p. 57, also A. Van Gennep, Chicago, trans. 1960, pp. 166–78 discusses this dedication and ritual cutting of the hair and its social and spiritual significance in many cultures.
20 Abdulla El Tayib, 1958, S.N.R., Vol. 37, p. 19
21 J.W. Crowfoot, 1992, S.N.R., Vol. 5, pp. 1–32
22 Colloquial Sudanese usually referring to all people who immigrated to the Sudan from West Africa, Nigeria in particular.
23 E.W. Boville, 1958, The Golden Trade of the Moors, pp. 111, 240
24 A.J. Arkell, 1945, The Ports of Aden and Shihr, S.N.R., Vol. 26
25 R.B. Sergeant, 1974, p. 223
26 In different historic periods brothels were a fact of life and sex workers lived in what were called *biyout ahrar*, homes marked with flags and writing on the walls. Later these were outlawed driving sex work underground.
27 Abdulla El Tayib in a personal communication suggested that this word *firka* derives from the Arabic word to reject – implying that the woman is rejecting the husband by placing this garment between her and him.
28 T. Krump, The Sudanese Travels of Theodoro Krump 1700-1702, trans. p. 33
29 Informant Saleh Haj Saad, mentioned earlier in this chapter
30 Corruption of cambric – which originally gets its name from the famous Flemish weaving city of Cambrai.
31 In the last decade the idea of *melabis jahza*, ready-made clothes, has become more and more prestigious.
32 J.L. Burckhardt, op. cit., p. 264
33 According to Awn Al Sharif's Dictionary of Colloquial Sudanese Arabic, 1972
34 See footnote 19, here in Chapter V.
35 Very lofty hairstyles which set the *tob* off very effectively revealing and framing the face were so popular that it seemed as if this style called *gubbat al mahdi*, the Mahdi's tomb, might remain a permanent feature accompanying the *tob* as does the high comb which sets off the famous Spanish Mantilla.
36 S. Hillelson, 1921, Arab Proverbs and Sayings, Riddles and Popular Beliefs, S.N.R., Vol. 4
37 M. Shinnie, 1964, Kush, Bells, Kush, Vol. III

Chapter VI – The Sudanese Tob

1 Personal contact with these informants

Chapter VII – Conclusions

1 Ibn Dayfalla, Muhammad al Nur, 1971, Tabaqat Wad Dayfalla fi auliya' wa salihin wa 'ulama wa shu'ara' al Sudan, Khartoum K.U.P
2 From Arabic: *Al umu aryana, ma bilabis khaltu*
3 From Arabic: *Al nas kharafu*
4 From Arabic: *Al nas kuluhum badu yilbasu kida*
5 From Arabic: *Shaklak zay ukhtak Sumaya wa bantalonak zay kees al bundugiya*
6 A term used for those influenced by foreigners, who worked with them or in the civil service and dressed in their style.

Chapter VIII – Then and Now

1 A coup by army personnel which resulted in the formation of a one-party system, the Socialist Union.
2 The *mashata* would come for the day and would have to be fed and watered.
3 A type of twill fabric that has diagonal lines or ridges on both sides, made with a two-up, two-down weave.
4 E. Nagy, 2014, Sand in My Eyes: Sudanese Moments

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Griselda El Tayib MBE, is a teacher and artist who settled with her husband, Professor Abdulla El Tayib, in Sudan in 1950. She established the fine arts departments at two Sudanese schools and two colleges and continues to lead a group of amateur painters. Her drawings and paintings, some of which have been used to illustrate books, capture nature, culture and daily life in the places where she has lived. Griselda's keen interest in traditional Sudanese costumes was awarded in 1976 the first MA in Folklore from the University of Khartoum for her thesis which forms the main body of this book. Griselda continues to lead a very active life and is a member of numerous voluntary and charitable organisations. In 2012, she was made Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for contributions to British-Sudanese relations.

Enikö Nagy holds a BA in Social Pedagogy and has lived in Sudan for over ten years, where she has worked for the DED (German Development Service), UNESCO and other local and international organisations. Various projects and publications she designed explore community development, identity and culture. Sand in My Eyes: Sudanese Moments, a literary coffee table book she produced, documents oral literature and intangible heritage in an epic journey through Sudan. She is the curator of a travelling exhibition from the book which has been displayed in many European capitals. For several years, she worked as the executive editor for a Horn of Africa journal about women's rights in religion and is a speaker for development education and global learning in Germany.

Sara El-Nager is a freelance journalist and writer with an MA in International Journalism. She has worked as a freelancer for BBC Monitoring for over ten years while pursuing her interests of researching and writing about Sudanese society, its culture and politics. She was part of a team commissioned by the British Embassy in Khartoum that produced a panel exhibition about the Queen's visit to Sudan in 1965. Sara is involved in a number of voluntary projects, for which she writes articles and organises media output, and has written the guides and speaker profiles for two TEDx events held in Khartoum.

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This valuable ethnographic reference is a descriptive and pictorial record of folk costumes of the main tribes in northern and eastern Sudan. It captures different historic periods and how change led to the disappearance of some of these costumes all the while offering insight into the relationship between costume and wearer. The book goes on to describe what has been adopted to replace vanishing apparel, including the latest fashion trends. Griselda El Tayib's in-depth study, with beautiful hand-painted illustrations, is sure to fascinate anyone who is interested in Sudan's rich cultural heritage as displayed through its people's dress.

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